

Good morning!

As you know, today, June 14th, is Flag Day 😊 Madam President asked me to do something in honor of this holiday. On this day, or the weekends surrounding this holiday.....it's the most popular time of the year for MANY groups to celebrate by hosting a Flag retirement ceremony.

I really wanted to do this for a couple reasons, (1) I'm ashamed to say it, but I have never actually attended a ceremony. I've collected them and given them to our local scouts, and they have always been amazing and helpful in that respect. And (2) I'm pretty sure I'm not the only one, so I hope you enjoy.

What I didn't know was, there are 1001 methods and guidelines & 1002 YouTube videos to help you get more confused before you even start taking notes! Even throughout VFWs across the Nation.....there is not ONE specific way. I consulted with scout leaders, VFW/Legion Commanders, Auxiliaries, and local groups that have done it often.... guess what.... all different? I was finally told, no matter how you conduct your ceremony, just be respectful.....it's traditional, yet flexible. If you treat Old Glory with respect and honor, you can't go wrong.

Normally burning the flag is listed as the first option, but Flags are made from a much wider range of products nowadays, since the US Flag Code was first created. Depending on what kind determines your choice of retirement procedures. That's why I recommend working together with organizations like the VFW, American Legion, or the Scouts. Although anyone can perform the ceremony, please check your US Flag code as well as the State/local codes, the specifications vary from state to state.

If you choose this method, be sure the fire is big and hot enough to completely incinerate the Flag. While it is burning, show respect by saluting, singing the National Anthem or reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Once you are sure it is entirely burned, the fire is put out completely and the ashes should be buried.

You can bury a flag in the ground in a well-constructed box to keep it protected. Some people do not find it proper, but keep in mind if it is buried in a dignified manner, it is allowed. Choosing this method, the cloth should not encounter the ground or dirt. Fold it properly and place it in the box to be placed in the ground. Always follow with a moment of silence or respectfully say a few words.

Flag recycling is common with synthetic and nylon flags because burning these materials can be hazardous. It is possible to take the nylon from an old flag and turn it into a brand new one. The proper way to do this is cutting apart each of the white and red stripes. Another method is to cut it in half vertically and then again horizontally. The most crucial step is to make sure the blue section with the stars stays intact. Keep in mind, this is for recycling to make new Flags or Ceremonies. Many well-meaning individuals have cut up soiled or worn Flags, cutting out stars and mailing them to our troops. Although this is a thoughtful gesture, it should not be conducted by any VFW Post or Auxiliary.

I'd like to ask my highly trained assistants to approach the fire pit at this time.

(2 on each side in front of pit, facing each other)

I realize many of you have attended these ceremonies, so please keep in mind, if it's not exactly the way you're used to, it's not wrong...just different. Keep an open mind.

Please enjoy as we respectfully, unofficially retire our Nation's Flag

Ceremony

(4 Officers unfold/stretch out the prefolded tattered flag in front of the fire pit. Each officer holding a corner of the flag.) (Cutter stands by)

Speaker: This flag has served well and long. It is no longer a fitting emblem to display, so we are respectfully retiring it today. It is a symbol of our nation.

Speaker: A flag ceases to be a flag when it is cut into pieces. We cut the flag into four pieces: three red and white striped banners and the blue star field. We leave the blue field intact because no one should ever let the union be broken.

(5th person cuts the flag horizontally in the middle, then cuts the Flag Vertically, leaving 4 squares, each one of the helpers holding a piece of the banner) (cutter returns to seat)

(4 Officers holding their parts of the banner, turn to face the fire pit- half circle formation)

Speaker: Seven red stripes and six white stripes; together they represent the original 13 colonies that gained us liberty.

(Officer 1 throws pc into the fire pit, heart salute, steps back)

Speaker: The red stripes remind us of the lifeblood of brave men and women who were ready to die for this, their country.

(Officer 2 throws pc into the fire pit, heart salute, steps back)

Speaker: The white stripes remind us of the purity of purpose, thought, word and deed.

(Officer 3 throws pc into the fire pit, heart salute, steps back)

Speaker: The blue is for truth and justice, like the eternal blue of the star-filled heavens.

(Officer 4 throws into the fire pit, heart salute, steps back)

Speaker will nod to officers to retrieve memorial flags to retire

(Officers return to fire pit lining up in a single formation, holding the folded flags, one hand each on bottom/top)(like you are presenting the Flag to someone)

Speaker: The U.S. flag should be treated with respect when it's flying, Therefore, we retire flags with dignity and respect when they become worn, torn, faded, or badly soiled.

The American Creed states, "it is my duty to my country to love it, to respect its Constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies."

As we place these sacred symbols into the fire, let it burn brightly and remind us how well our flag represents our country. (cues officers)

(Each Officer places their folded flag into the fire pit and says

Officers: "This is in memory of (deceased Veteran)" heart salute and return to half circle formation)

Speaker: I ask you all to please stand if you are able...facing the Flag of our Nation, join me in the Pledge of Allegiance (recites pledge in unison) Let us pray, Heavenly Father we ask that you bless these Flags that have flown with respect. We ask that you protect all those in our armed forces who serve to ensure that we have the right to fly and retire these Flags. Bless all those who put themselves in harm's way to protect these rights. Amen.

Speaker: You may be seated.

Speaker: Officers, you are dismissed, thank you. This concludes this ceremony.

Retiring Old Glory, cutting protocol

