

HB 406 - Designate and display Honor and Remember Flag

Testimony of David K. Root

Before the House Armed Services and Veterans affairs Committee

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

Chairman Perales, Vice Chairman Hood, Ranking Member Weinstein, and Members of the House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee, good afternoon and thank you for allowing me to give testimony today on House Bill 406.

My name is David Root, and I am a US Navy Veteran who served during the Vietnam War. I am also a past State Commander for the Department of Ohio, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Last May I stood before you and testified on behalf of the Department's 24-member Council of Administration.

Today I am here to offer my own testimony in support of House Bill 406. I stated in May that the Council and I were in favor the *Honor and Remember Flag* becoming an official symbol of recognition and a visual emblem of honor. My feelings are as strong today as they were then. I would very much like to see Ohio join the 26 other states who have already passed legislation to make the *Honor and Remember Flag* an official symbol to recognize the sacrifice of generations of fallen hero families.

I have talked to many people about this flag and most of them are in favor of officially recognizing it. I say most people are in favor because there are a few who are die hard American patriots who do not feel a need for the flag. But they are not understanding the purpose of the *Honor and Remember Flag*. You have all heard what the *Honor and Remember Flag* is designed to do through other testimony. I would like to talk about what it is not going to do.

The pushback I get is that the family of a service member who is killed in action already gets a flag of honor. In a very moving and touching ceremony, usually during interment, the United State Flag is removed from the coffin and carefully folded until it is a nice, neat triangle. It is then presented to a member of the serviceman's family "...on behalf of a grateful nation." I think we can all agree that there is no greater symbol than the flag of our country; the very flag that that soldier fought and died under while protecting our freedoms. Some people have the belief that we should not replace the American Flag. I say the *Honor and Remember Flag* is not trying to take the place of our Country's Flag.

The *Honor and Remember Flag* should not, will not, and cannot, ever replace Old Glory.

I would like to point out that years ago, many people worked extremely hard to get a flag known as the National League of Families POW/MIA Flag, recognized nationally as a symbol to always remember our service men and women who were prisoners of war or missing in action. They fought long and hard for that flag. Today it is recognized across our nation as a national symbol. But at the beginning, the same misunderstanding we have today slowed its acceptance. People worried that the POW/MIA Flag would replace the American Flag. The argument was that our Prisoners of War and our Missing in Action already had a flag. They didn't need another one. Well those people were wrong and today there is not anyone who thinks the POW/MIA Flag has replaced the American Flag. Since it was adopted in 1972 and is now recognized by all. When and where the flag must be flown is dictated in Title 36 of the United States Code. In the same chapter of Title 36 is a section that requires the President of the United States to present the Medal of Honor Flag to each person awarded the Medal of Honor. The Medal of Honor Flag was first awarded in 2005. Like the POW/MIA Flag it was not created to replace, but to honor. It is my hope that the *Honor and Remember Flag* will also be listed in Title 36 of the United States Code along with those other two flags. With your help today, it will take a step closer to accomplishing that task.

The *Honor and Remember Flag* will be in addition to our beloved Stars and Stripes. It will never replace it. No flag ever has, even though we have flags for just about everything. The President has a flag. Both chambers of Congress have a flag. Every Branch of the Armed Services has a flag. Every state has a flag. Many companies have flags. Religions have flags. Organizations have flags. Colleges and universities have flags. And all those flags are in addition to the American Flag. They all fly below or next to our country's banner just like the *Honor and Remember Flag* will. Not one out of all those flags has replaced Old Glory.

I believe the *Honor and Remember Flag* needs to become a national symbol, not to replace the American Flag, but to remind us of the sacrifice made by members of our armed forces and to send a message of appreciation to those families they left behind. For those reasons, I urge you to vote yea for favorable passage of House Bill 406.

I again want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak this afternoon. I would be happy to answer any question that the committee may have

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