

"the land of the free and the home of the brave." So I think our flag is a great unifier. Respect for the flag begins at an early age, and is constantly reinforced throughout our life. We sing the national anthem at special events, begin school days with the Pledge of Allegiance, and stand at attention at Veterans Day parades when our soldiers proudly march through the streets holding high the flag that they protect.

Few things stir more emotion and patriotism for us as the Iwo Jima Memorial which depicts the marines risking their lives to raise our flag. I served in the Pacific in World War II, so it is hard for me to conceive that we have reached a point in our history where there is such casual disregard for the flag that some citizens would desecrate it.

Opponents have raised several legitimate concerns over the amendment. One of these is whether the amendment would carve out an exception to the first amendment. This amendment would simply overturn two erroneous decisions of the Supreme Court which misconstrued the first amendment. In one of those cases, Justice John Paul Stevens' dissent summed up the symbol of the flag best in the case of *Texas versus Johnson* decision, which was handed down in 1989 and unfortunately, allowed flag desecration. Justice Stevens said:

It is a symbol of equal opportunity, of religious tolerance, of good will for other people who share our aspirations. The symbol carries its message to dissidents both at home and abroad who may have no interest at all in our national unity or survival.

By protecting this one unique national symbol, we have not reduced our freedom of speech. The first amendment has been interpreted broadly by the courts over the years, but it has never been deemed absolute. It does not protect "fighting words" or yelling "fire" in a crowded theater. Prior to 1989, Americans' right to express their views was not curtailed by the laws of 48 States, which prohibited flag desecration. Other matters, such as obscenity, defamation, or other restrictions on freedom of speech, such as the destruction of a draft card, have been held by courts not to come within the purview of the first amendment.

Another concern which has been raised is that there is no need for an amendment. The number of times the desecration of the flag is documented is not the point. The law should not turn simply on the number of cases; it should turn on what effect there is on the flag as a symbol of the unity and freedom of our country each time it is desecrated. This flag is devalued when there exists no legal means to protect the flag from those who would desecrate it in order to express their views.

I believe this amendment will not deter flag desecration in all cases. In some cases, it may even spur a handful of people to burn flags in order to test its purpose. But by allowing the flag

the protection of a constitutional amendment, we reiterate our belief that we ourselves value the flag as a symbol of what America stands for.

Our society is increasingly pluralistic, and being an American means many different things. As we highlight our differences in this changing world, we must remember what unites us. Without unity, there would be no America. The flag is a great unifier that brings together Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals, and people from all walks of life and different persuasions. The flag crosses religious belief, race, cultural heritage, geography, and age. To disregard the power and the importance of our flag is to take us down a path that we would be wise not to follow.

I think we should support this constitutional amendment, and I feel that it is important that we do so. I believe that the vast majority of the American people support the amendment. In fact, a 1995 Gallup Poll was taken, which asked whether the American people thought that we should have the right to determine by vote whether or not the flag should be protected from desecration. Eighty-one percent of the people said "yes." Asked whether they thought such an amendment would jeopardize their right to freedom of speech, 76 percent answered that it would not jeopardize their freedom of speech.

So I feel that there is great support for this effort across the land, and I hope my colleagues will join us in adopting this constitutional amendment, which will give great importance to America and to the flag that unites us, because the flag that we pledge allegiance to is a pledge also to our Republic and to our belief in this great country of ours.

I yield the floor.

Mr. GRAMM addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

DISCUSSIONS ON THE BUDGET AND BOSNIA

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, I see that we have no other colleagues on the floor ready to speak on this subject, so I would like to speak both about Bosnia and about the budget negotiations that are going on here in the Capitol. I would like to talk about both because I think they are very important.

Mr. President, I am opposed to sending American troops to Bosnia. I have not reached this conclusion quickly; I listened to President Bush and the Bush administration debate this issue at some length and followed that debate pretty closely. They reached the conclusion that sending ground troops to Bosnia was a mistake. My consistent position during that debate was that I also opposed sending ground troops to Bosnia.

I have now had 3 years, counting the Presidential campaign in 1992, to listen

to President Clinton try to make the case that we should send American ground troops into Bosnia. I am perfectly aware—and I say it with no criticism intended—that the President is a very effective salesman. I have concluded that his failure to convince me, and his failure to convince the country, on the issue of sending ground troops to Bosnia is not the result of his lack of ability as a salesman. I think it has resulted from the fact that this position cannot credibly be sold.

I have always tried to use three tests in deciding whether to send Americans into combat or into harm's way. I have applied those tests in the past and I have applied them to sending ground troops to Bosnia:

First, do we have a vital national interest? In the Persian Gulf, we had a military dictator who was working to build chemical and nuclear weapons, and who had invaded a neighboring country. His military aggression threatened two vital allies of the United States—Israel and Saudi Arabia. And so, clearly, in the Persian Gulf we had a vital national interest.

I have been to the region that we are discussing today. I have talked to our military at some length. Like virtually every other person in the country who keeps up with what is happening in our country and around the world, I am aware of the terrible misery that has plagued all of what used to be Yugoslavia, and especially the misery in Bosnia. But I have concluded that we do not have a vital national interest in this region.

The second question that I tried to ask is: Can our intervention be decisive in promoting our vital interests? It is one thing to have a vital national interest; it is another thing to be able to be decisive in promoting that interest.

In the Persian Gulf war, we had the military capacity to promote our vital national interest.

We also had a clearly defined objective: drive Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. We were able to put together an alliance and a plan that was as detailed about how we were going to end the war and get out of the Middle East, as it was about how we were going to intervene.

I concluded in the Persian Gulf that we did have the capacity through our intervention to promote our vital interests. Certainly history has proven that to have been the case.

I do not believe, however, that we have this capacity in Bosnia. I am very concerned about putting young Americans into the line of fire as a buffer force between two warring factions which have broken every cease-fire and have violated almost every treaty over the past 500 years.

Now we have proposals, both from the administration and from the leadership of the Senate, which say that we should not only serve as a buffer force between those warring factions, but remarkably, in my humble opinion, that at the same time we

should be engaged in overtly arming and training one of the belligerents in this conflict.

I have to say, Mr. President, I respectfully disagree with that policy. I supported lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia. I thought it might make sense under some circumstances for Americans to provide training—not in Bosnia—but maybe somewhere else. It might make sense to train some of their senior officials in the United States, which is the sort of thing we have done in the past.

I believe there is a conflict between the role of arming the Bosnians and serving as a neutral buffer force. I think that many even in our own Senate, and certainly some in the administration, have not reconciled how we could serve those two functions at the same time. It is not possible to be a neutral buffer force and, at the same time, be involved in the training and arming one side.

I know, from having discussed this with some of our colleagues, there is a belief that we, in essence, took sides when we bombed the Serbs. If that is so, then this should disqualify us from serving in this intervention/peacekeeping role. I think it was a different situation. The Serbs had been issued an order by the United Nations to stop the shelling and to withdraw their heavy weapons. They refused to do it.

NATO was asked to be the military arm of the U.N. forces in that case, a terrible command structure—one I would never support under any circumstance in the future and have not supported in the past.

The point is, in no way do I see how our intervention, in a period of time of roughly 1 year as set by the President, how this is going to change anything in Bosnia. There is no reason to believe that our intervention is going to be decisive.

Finally, let me say that in representing a big State with many people serving in the military, it has been my responsibility, after both Somalia and the Persian Gulf, to console parents and spouses of young Texans who have given their lives in the service of our country.

In talking to families, it has struck me that at least in my case there ought to be one more test. That test ought to be this: I have two college age sons; if one of my sons was in the 82d Airborne Division, would I be willing to send him into battle? It seems to me that if I cannot answer this question with a yes—no ifs ands or buts about it; and in the Persian Gulf I could answer it yes, no ifs ands or buts about it—if I cannot answer this question with a yes, then I cannot feel comfortable sending someone else's son or sending someone else's daughter.

So I am opposed to sending American troops into Bosnia. I intend to vote against the President's resolution asking Congress to join him in endorsing this policy. I am concerned we are in the process of seeing a resolution put

together that, quite frankly, is full of escape clauses and ejection seats so that politicians can be on both sides of the issue.

I want a clear-cut vote where we can vote "yes" we support the President's policy to send troops to Bosnia; or "no," we do not. I intend to see that we get such a clear-cut, up or down vote.

I am working with roughly a dozen of our colleagues who want to have that vote. I think it is very important that we say where we stand. I know there will be those who will try to combine the issue of supporting the troops with supporting the President. Quite frankly, I do not buy into that logic and I do not think it serves our political system well to try to combine the two. There is not a Member of the Senate, nor has there ever been a Member, who would not support the troops.

It is because I support the troops, because I am concerned about their well-being, that I am opposed to sending troops to Bosnia. I have no doubt that the Americans who serve in the Armed Forces of the United States will go where their Commander in Chief sends them. They will serve proudly. They will do their job well. That is not the issue here.

Their performance is not in doubt; it is our performance that is in doubt. Their ability to do their job is not being questioned. It is our ability in the Senate to do our job that is being questioned.

I think it is important that there be no ifs, ands or buts about it, that we ought to have a clear-cut vote as to who supports the President's policy in Bosnia, and who does not. I, for one, do not.

Let me add one other thing. This whole issue has nothing to do with politics. It has nothing to do with Bill Clinton. It has nothing to do with our distinguished majority leader, Senator DOLE, who supports the President on this issue. It has everything to do with my obligation to 18 million Texans who elected me.

I was against sending troops into Bosnia when George Bush was President. I am against sending troops into Bosnia now that Bill Clinton is President, and I am going to be against sending troops into Bosnia when someone else occupies the White House. This is an issue that I think is vitally important and goes to the very heart of what the role of Congress is. I believe that here we should say "no."

BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. GRAMM. Let me, Mr. President, talk about the budget negotiations. I am concerned that if we let this budget impasse go past the first of the year, that the financial markets in America are going to begin to react to the fact that no deficit reduction has occurred.

I want to remind my colleagues that the election which occurred in 1994 is one of the clearest examples that I have ever seen of how elections can

have tremendous economic consequences. If I were still serving in my role as a professor of economics at Texas A&M instead of serving in the role, as I often feel, of trying to teach economics here in Washington, DC—students at Texas A&M were a little more attentive—I would use the plotting of interest rates in America as a perfect example of how elections have profound economic consequences, because I know that the people who have looked at the data are as astounded as I am at the results we would see.

Interest rates were rising steadily until the day of the 1994 elections. When we had the most decisive election since 1934, interest rates suddenly started to decline. They have declined ever since, and as a result, the average annual mortgage payment on a 30-year mortgage in America has been reduced by about \$1,200. That is a dramatic change.

Now, it seems to me that the logic of this change is based on the rational expectation that the 1994 election, which brought a Republican majority in both Houses of Congress, was going to produce a dramatic change in the spending patterns of our Government. As we all know, Republicans had promised in the election that they would institute such a change, that we would balance the budget, that we would let working people keep more of what they earn, and that we would make some very modest changes to try to promote economic growth.

Now we are on the verge of going into the new year without any of those changes having occurred. We have passed a budget, but the President is going to veto it. That means we have to start the whole process over. I simply want to raise a warning and a red flag that if we do not stand our ground on the 15th of December, if we simply give President Clinton another credit card without forcing him to sit down with us—the way families sit down at their kitchen table with a pencil and piece of paper and write out a budget that everybody agrees they are going to stick with—if we simply give President Clinton another credit card 10 days before Christmas and do not exact for that, some change that begins to implement a balanced budget, I am concerned that after the first of the year the markets that had changed their investment patterns on the belief that we would see a dramatic change in the fiscal policy of the country are no doubt going to reevaluate their position and interest rates are going to start going up.

I believe that if we do not do something about this deficit before the first of the year, then we risk a rise in interest rates. I know it is very tempting to say, 10 days before Christmas, we do not want a confrontation with the President. It is also fair to say that, 10 days before Christmas, the President does not want a confrontation with us either. I do not think this is the time to fold up our tent and go home. I