

# The “Solution” to Flag-Burning is Simpler Than a Constitutional Amendment

On June 14 — “Flag Day” in the United States — US Senator Steve Daines (R-MT) and US Representative Steve Womack (R-AR) proposed a constitutional amendment: “The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States.” President Donald Trump promptly indicated his support for the amendment via Twitter, calling it a “no-brainer.”

The amendment isn’t likely to get approval by 2/3 of both houses of Congress and ratification by the legislatures of at least 38 states, to become part of the US Constitution.

Nor is that its proponents’ goal. It’s just another perennial election tactic, pulled out in every Congress since the Supreme Court noticed that flag-burning is protected by the First Amendment, that Republicans hope will gain them a few points in close races by allowing them to caricature their Democratic opponents as “unpatriotic.”

One downside of the tactic is that it exposes those who use or support it as authoritarians. Which, admittedly, doesn’t hurt Republican candidates very much since most of them work overtime to expose themselves as such anyway.

Another downside of the tactic is that it allows authoritarian Democrats to use flag-burning as a proxy for civil liberties generally so that they can pretend they support freedom.

If flag-burning is really a “problem,” it’s a problem with a simple solution:

If you don’t want to burn a flag, don’t buy a flag, soak it in kerosene, and set it on fire.

If you do want to burn a flag, don’t steal someone else’s flag, and don’t burn a flag on the private property of someone who objects, or in a way that creates a danger to others (in a dry forest, for example).

Either way, don’t try to tell people what they may or may not do with pieces of cloth they rightfully own.

Wow, see how easy that was?

Yes, I understand that many Americans care deeply about the flag. I get it. I served under it in the Marine Corps. My grandfather’s coffin was draped in the 48-star version of it in honor of his service in World War 2.

The flag is an inspiring symbol for millions. Those millions are fully entitled to their heartfelt

emotions over it and to express those motions by standing in its presence, singing songs that praise it, and so forth.

For others, it symbolizes various evils to which they object. And those others are likewise entitled to voice their objections in any peaceful manner they choose, including burning it.

It's a piece of cloth. Anything beyond that is something you bring to it, not an intrinsic quality of the flag itself. Feel free to express your convictions through the flag. And tolerate others who do likewise.