

MARINE FIGHTS FOR OLD GLORY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, history, heritage and symbols of the United States are constantly under criticism in this country. Even yesterday when we read the Constitution of the United States on the House floor, the first time it has ever been done in 200 years, there were some who complained that it is irrelevant. It is kind of like folks in church that cover their ears when certain sections of the Bible are read. They don't want to hear it because it may apply to them.

People go to court nowadays to try to remove our national motto, In God We Trust. It is above the flag, Mr. Speaker, although television very seldom shows our national motto.

Then there are those who are offended by the American flag, Old Glory. It is not even displayed in parts of the United States because it offends some people. Some people that are included in the group are foreigners who are offended by the American flag.

Now we get to today, a report by the Houston Chronicle about Marine Michael Merola, a 60-year-old vet from the United States Marine Corps, and he flies, here he is, he still looks like a Marine, this is a photograph from the Chronicle that shows Old Glory and, of course, the Marine flag, flying in his backyard on a 20-foot flagpole.

No one has complained. His neighbors like it. Kids walk by and actually compliment him on flying Old Glory and the Marine flag. But the neighborhood association has complained and sued.

Now, who is this guy? Well, he served in the United States Marines from 1969 to 1977. He trained with the United States Navy SEALs. After he left the Marine Corps, he was responsible as sergeant of the guard for raising the flag at NSA right down the road. He is from New York, but he got to Texas as fast as he could, and he has no intention of taking down this flag or flagpole. He is a passionate American. He is a marine.

But the association doesn't like it, and here is what they have said in their lawsuit: the flagpole is a detriment to the association. It causes imminent harm and irreparable injury to the association. The problem with the flagpole of that height and that significance is it flaps in the wind and causes noise to other homeowners. That is their problem. So they sued him.

Now, first of all, we have an issue of freedom of speech. The Supreme Court has said it is a right to fly the flag. Speech includes the flying of the American flag. It is the symbol of everything that is good and right about America. That is why it is behind you, Mr. Speaker, when we go into session every day.

Marines and sailors and soldiers and members of the Coast Guard have fought under that flag all over the

world and have died for that flag so the association can exist down there in northwest Houston. Right now we are engaged in two wars, in Afghanistan and Iraq, and members of our military are fighting under that flag. But it is flying in the breeze and offends the association because the flapping causes irreparable injury.

Well, flapping in the breeze has brought safety to the United States. The flag flying throughout the world and the noise, if we can use that word, the sound of freedom, is the sound of that flag flying in the United States and throughout the world. It is freedom of speech, and it trumps the elitist concept that the flag and the flagpole are offensive to the association.

You know, Mr. Merola is a marine. Once a marine, always a marine. And we are proud of our marines in the United States. They are a unique bunch. That was best said by an Army general about the Marines, "There are only two groups that understand the marines—the marines, and the enemy." And that is correct.

So good for you, Mike Merola. Keep your flagpole up. Fly Old Glory. Fly the marine flag. We are proud of you. Keep fighting for the flag, because freedom of flying the flag trumps the concept that it is offensive to some people.

God bless our marines, God bless you, Mike Merola, and semper fi.

And that's just the way it is.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FRANKS of Arizona addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HEALTH CARE AND OTHER ISSUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I very much appreciate the privilege to address you here on the floor of the House in this leadership hour designated by the majority leader.

There are a number of subjects I wanted to take up this afternoon, but I am first inspired by the statement made by the gentleman from Texas, Judge, Congressman, Mr. POE, about Marine Mike Merola.

This is one of these recurring stories that we hear across the country. Somebody that is an ACLU individual, some-

body that thinks somehow they get indignant because there is something somewhere that would allow them to vent some of their prepackaged hyperventilation against patriotism or the truth or life or the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence or American values or the values of Western Civilization or Judeo-Christianity, all those people out there are full of indignities.

So an American flag and a marine flag offends somebody? I say tough. I am glad you are there. Fly that flag. Fly it proud and fly it long.

I especially appreciate the statement made by Mr. POE about the sound of that flag. My flag is on a flagpole about that same height, 20 foot. I step out my door in the morning, I check the wind and the weather and I look at that flag, and I listen to that sound. And there is times I am sitting there in the dark at night on my deck and I am hearing that flag from the light that shines on it around the corner just a little bit, and I hear that ripple of Old Glory. It gives me comfort and it gives me pride, and it reminds me of the privilege of serving here, anywhere you can serve Americans anywhere on this globe.

I think of a time also on March 18, 2003, where I went out here to Pershing Park, this side of the White House, when there was an antiwar demonstration that took place. I actually walked around through the Mall, around the Washington Monument as they prepared their demonstration. I remember former chairman of the Judiciary Committee, John Conyers, standing on a little stage there with great big speakers calling for the impeachment of President Bush because it looked like there was an impending liberation of Iraq. And I saw a man there.

Every kind of discontented, counter-cultural, anti-American group was represented in those thousands of people that came here that day. I saw the Japanese communist flag. I saw Vegetarians for Peace. I saw every counter-culturalist group you can imagine. And I saw a man there, an aging hippie. He had on a jacket. He was a photographer, you could tell, and he was taking pictures with great pride of this anti-Americanism.

He reached in his pocket of his jacket, a worn leather jacket, and pulled out of his pocket a flag, an American flag, a silk American flag, a small flag, and he used it to wipe the lens of his camera. That is an image I will never forget.

But no one stepped up to say he couldn't do that. Where were they then? Where were the critics of Mr. Merola then? When flags are used as grease rags to scrub the lens of a camera that is taking pictures of anti-Americans joined together to protest the saving of our freedom that Marine Merola has stepped up to defend.

Those actions against him are offensive to me, and I say guard the flag, defend the flag, and I will stand with you, and I know Judge POE will too. Thanks