

# CEREMONY FOR THE RETIREMENT OF A UNITED STATES FLAG

*Note: If more than one flag is to be retired the field should be pre-separated from all but 1 of the flags. In the ceremony, separate the field from the remaining flag and retire all fields together with the pre-separated field. Likewise for the pre-separated stripes.*

*The fire should be sufficiently large to place the entire flag in the fire with no parts sticking out. A good bed of coals is more desirable than a just-lit bonfire.*

**LEADER:** The United States Flag Code states that when the flag has become worn and is no longer fit for display it should be destroyed in a dignified manner, preferably by burning. It's important to note that this is the proper way to dispose of flag. When done in a solemn manner rather than a spirit of protest this act can be a very moving occasion.

*(PAUSE)*

Color Guard, Advance.

*(WHEN COLOR GUARD IS IN PLACE)* Color Guard, Post.

*(COLOR GUARD UNFOLDS FLAG SO THAT IT IS FACING AUDIENCE. LEADER READS THE FOLLOWING PATRIOTIC NARRATIVE)*

*("I am the Flag" by Ruth Apperson Rous)*

I am the flag of the United States of America.

I was born on June 14, 1777, in Philadelphia.

There the Continental Congress adopted my stars and stripes as the national flag.

My thirteen stripes alternating red and white, with a union of thirteen white stars in a field of blue, represented a new constellation, a new nation dedicated to the personal and religious liberty of mankind.

Today fifty stars signal from my union, one for each of the fifty sovereign states in the greatest constitutional republic the world has ever known.

My colors symbolize the patriotic ideals and spiritual qualities of the citizens of my country.

My red stripes proclaim the fearless courage and integrity of American men and boys and the self-sacrifice and devotion of American mothers and daughters.

My white stripes stand for liberty and equality for all.

My blue is the blue of heaven, loyalty, and faith.

I represent these eternal principles: liberty, justice, and humanity.

I embody American freedom: freedom of speech, religion, assembly, the press, and the sanctity of the home.

I typify that indomitable spirit of determination brought to my land by Christopher Columbus and by all my forefathers - the Pilgrims, Puritans, settlers at James town and Plymouth.

I am as old as my nation.

I am a living symbol of my nation's law: the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights.

I voice Abraham Lincoln's philosophy: "A government of the people, by the people, for the people."

I stand guard over my nation's schools, the seedbed of good citizenship and true patriotism.

I am displayed in every schoolroom throughout my nation; every schoolyard has a flag pole for my display.

Daily thousands upon thousands of boys and girls pledge their allegiance to me and my country.

I have my own law—Public Law 829, "The Flag Code" - which definitely states my correct use and display for all occasions and situations.

I have my special day, Flag Day. June 14 is set aside to honor my birth.

Americans, I am the sacred emblem of your country. I symbolize your birthright, your heritage of liberty purchased with blood and sorrow.

I am your title deed of freedom, which is yours to enjoy and hold in trust for posterity.

If you fail to keep this sacred trust inviolate, if I am nullified and destroyed, you and your children will become slaves to dictators and despots.

Eternal vigilance is your price of freedom.

As you see me silhouetted against the peaceful skies of my country, remind yourself that I am the flag of your country, that I stand for what you are - no more, no less.

Guard me well, lest your freedom perish from the earth.

Dedicate your lives to those principles for which I stand: "One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

I was created in freedom. I made my first appearance in a battle for human liberty.

God grant that I may spend eternity in my "land of the free and the home of the brave" and that I shall ever be known as "Old Glory," the flag of the United States of America.

LEADER: Color Guard, Prepare to separate the field.

*(PAUSE WHILE COLOR GUARD TURNS FLAG HORIZONTAL AND ONE MEMBER TAKES POSITION ON ONE SIDE OF BLUE FIELD)*

Color Guard, Separate the field.

*(PAUSE WHILE ONE MEMBER OF COLOR GUARD CUTS THE BLUE FIELD OF STARS FROM THE REST OF THE FLAG)*

Color Guard, Retire the stripes; Scouts, Hand Salute.

*(COLOR GUARD HOLDS STRIPES OVER FIRE AND GENTLY LAYS THEM ON THE FIRE, TOSSING THE CORNERS IN TO THE CENTER OF THE FIRE)*

*(PAUSE THEN)* Color Guard, Retire the field.

*(COLOR GUARD REPEATS SAME PROCESS AS WAS DONE FOR STRIPES)*

*(WHEN FLAG IS NO LONGER RECOGNIZABLE)* Two.

This ceremony is concluded, as you leave here reflect on what this nation means to you.