The Citizens Flag Alliance
Flag Desecration Amendment
Research Program

March 13, 2002

⌘⌘⌘ Market Strategies

Research Objectives

- Gauge the persistence of flag amendment support post-9/11.
- Measure intensity of support for immediate Senate action on the amendment.
- Determine core sources of support for the amendment.
- Evaluate the potential electoral impact of the flag issue for amendment opponents.

Research Design

- MSI National Omnibus Survey
- N=800 adults 18+
- Field dates: February 12-14, 2002
- Full sample margin of error: ± 3.5%

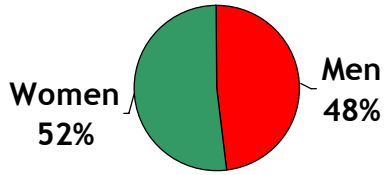
National Sample Demographics

17

44% Dems

47% Repubs

Gender



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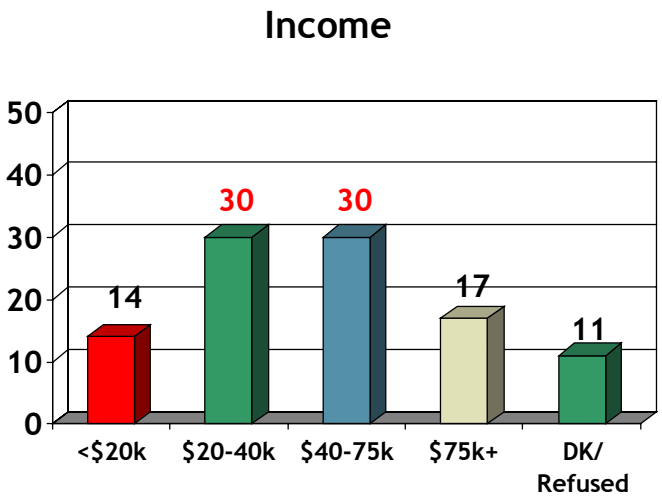
National Sample Demographics (cont.)



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General Awareness of Flag Issue

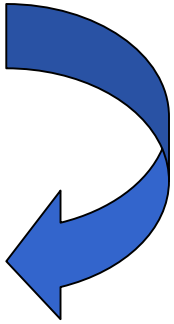
62% say they are aware that it is currently legal to desecrate the American flag.

Knowledge of Flag Amendment Debate in Congress

% Heard About the Debate	
Age 18-24	**20**
Age 25 and older	44

Do you value the Flag more post-9/11?

- The effect of 9/11 on valuing the flag is linearly related to age. Younger respondents are more likely to report valuing the flag more in the wake of 9/11.



Age

Support for Flag Amendment

75% Support in National Sample

- An Alliance of Young and Old: Support for the amendment is strongest among the very young and the very old. With 80% favoring the amendment, 18-24 year olds are the second most supportive age group. Only 65+ respondents are more pro-flag (85%).

Amendment Support (cont.)

More Than a Decade of Consistent National Support*

*1990-1998 source: Gallup. 2002 source: MSI

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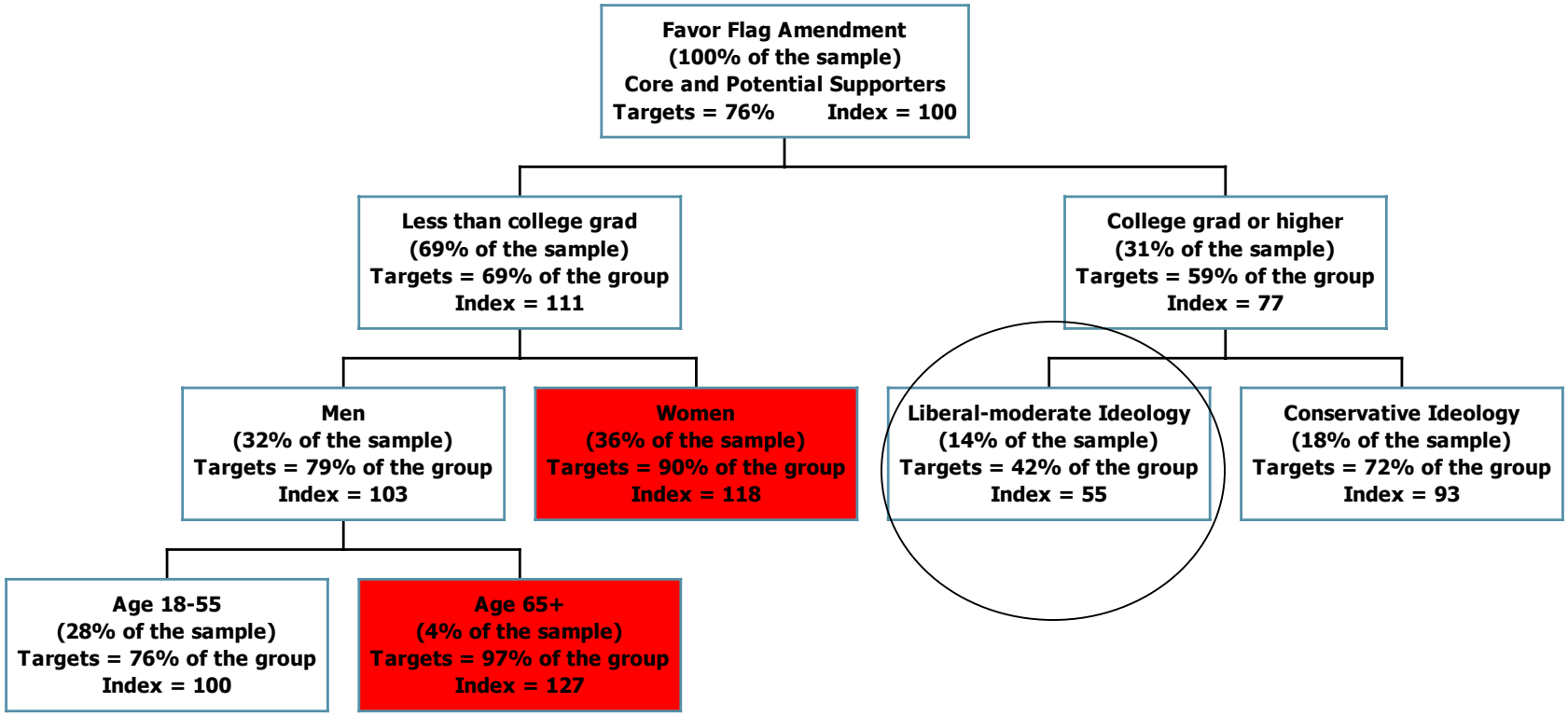
Flag Support Segmentation Model



* "Core" supporters shown in red. See Appendix for further explanation of the CHAID model these results are based on.

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Segmentation Interpretation

- The most important split is education, with less educated respondents being more pro-flag.
- Segmentation reveals 2 target groups within the less educated category:
  - ⇒ Women
  - ⇒ Men 65 and older
- The most anti-flag cluster is comprised of college grads who are ideologically liberal or moderate. This is a key pattern found throughout the data …

36% of sample

- **The Elite Skeptics**: Respondents who are wealthy ($75k or more), well-educated (college or more), and politically active (vote most or all of the time) are generally less pro-flag as gauged by most measures of amendment support

Importance of Debate and Action

Nationally, 76% say it is extremely, very, or somewhat important that the Senate debates the flag amendment during its current session.

The Flag Gender Gap

% favor amendment

+ 10

% NOT heard about flag debate

+ 15

% important Senate debate now

+ 7

% value flag more

+ 9

Women 18-24 are perhaps the most pro-flag of any demographic group. 9/11 may partly explain this finding. 59% of men 18-24 say they value the flag more after 9/11, and a striking 70% of women 18-24 report this same perspective. 9/11 affected every American, but it appears to have had a disproportionate impact on the patriotism of younger Americans, especially women.

National Sample

Reasons For and Against the Amendment

- **After considering the major arguments surrounding the amendment (e.g., free speech, infrequency of desecration, importance of the issue, and uniqueness of the flag), a majority of respondents endorse every pro-flag position.**

Majority Support For?

Passing a law to protect the American flag from desecration DOES NOT limit anyone's freedom of speech or their right to disagree with our country's policies or laws, but simply recognizes the flag as the unique symbol of the basic freedoms and values that make this country great.	
Amending the Constitution to allow the passage of laws to to protect the American flag from desecration IS NECESSARY because even though actual flag burnings are infrequent, many people see, hear, and read about those desecrations and are seriously upset by them.	
DISAGREE: Congress should NOT pass a flag protection amendment because it is not important enough to justify changing the Constitution.	
The American flag is a unique symbol of our nation and the principles it stands for. Above all other emblems of the United States, the flag is distinct and deserves special status.	

Flag Messages – Limit Free Speech?

National Trends - % does NOT limit speech

Some people say passing a law to protect the American flag from desecration DOES NOT limit anyone's freedom of speech or their right to disagree with our country's policies or laws, but simply recognizes the flag as the unique symbol of the basic freedoms and values that make this country great. Other people say passing a law to protect the American flag from desecration DOES limit freedom of expression and, even though we might be disgusted by the action of burning the flag, the protection of individual freedoms such as speech is more important than any punishment. Which viewpoint comes closer to your own?

*1996-1997 source: Wirthlin. 2002 source: MSI

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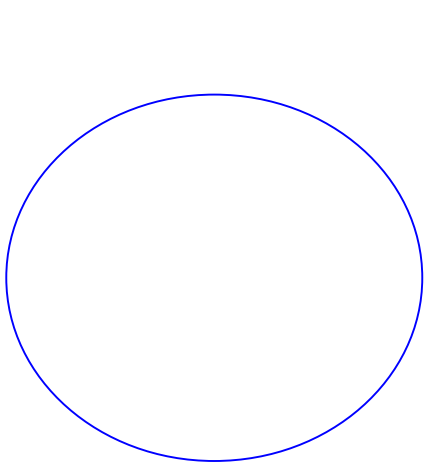
Flag Messages – Unnecessary?

Some people say amending the Constitution to allow the passage of laws to protect the American flag from desecration IS NOT NECESSARY because actual flag burning incidents are infrequent. Other people say amending the Constitution to allow the passage of laws to to protect the American flag from desecration IS NECESSARY because even though actual flag burnings are infrequent, many people see, hear, and read about those desecrations and are seriously upset by them. Which viewpoint comes closer to your own?



Flag Messages – Unimportant?

54% disagree in National Sample

67% of **18-24 year olds** hold this pro-flag opinion.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Congress should NOT pass a flag protection amendment because it is not important enough to justify changing the Constitution. A flag amendment would just clutter the Constitution with a new and insignificant provision."

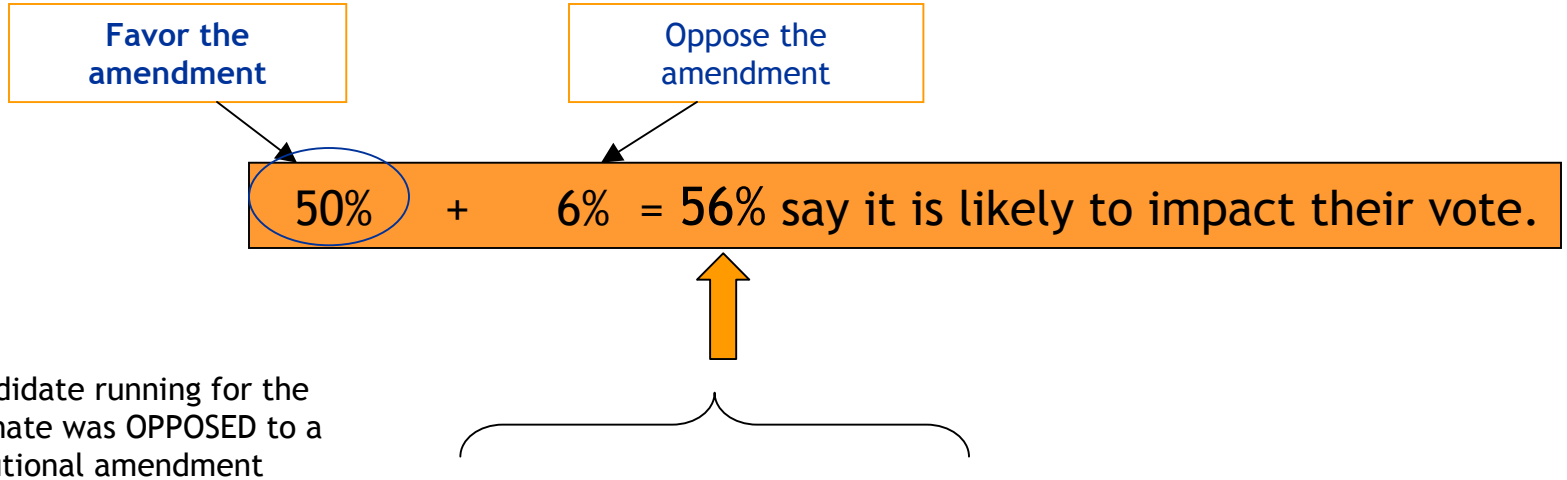
Flag Messages – Unique Symbol?

91% agree the flag deserves special status

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “The American flag is a unique symbol of our nation and the principles it stands for. Above all other emblems of the United States, the flag is distinct and deserves special status."

Stated Vote Impact

- **Half of all adult respondents say that the flag issue would be extremely, very, or somewhat likely to in and of itself determine their vote AGAINST any senator who opposed the amendment.**



If a candidate running for the U.S. Senate was OPPOSED to a constitutional amendment that would restore Congress' ability to prohibit the flag from being desecrated, how likely is it that this particular difference ALONE would determine your vote on election day?

Report Prepared by:

Jeff Hayes, PhD
Market Strategies Inc.
1199 N. Fairfax St.
Suite 400
Alexandria, VA 22314
jeff_hayes@marketstrategies.com
202.468.7219