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Attachments:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Flag Amendment Introduced in Senate

WASHINGTON (May 6, 2009) - Sen. David Vitter, R-La., introduced a proposed constitutional amendment today that would return to the American people the right to protect their flag from desecration. SJ Res. 15 reads "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States." Reps. Jo Ann Emerson, R-Mo., and Jim Marshall, D-Ga., introduced a similar resolution in the House of Representatives on April 30.

The measure has overwhelmingly passed in the House of Representatives during six consecutive Congresses, only to fall short in the Senate - the last time by just a single vote.

"The American Legion is grateful that Sen. Vitter has introduced this common sense amendment once again in the Senate," said the leader of the nation's largest veterans service organization, National Commander David K. Rehbein. "We believe the Supreme Court made a mistake when a narrow majority ruled that flag desecration was free speech. A constitutional amendment is the only way to reverse that mistake."

The commander was referring to 1989's *Texas v. Johnson* case in which a 5-4 majority invalidated flag protection laws in 48 states and the District of Columbia. In 1990, the Supreme Court invalidated a flag protection statute passed by Congress as well. To date, 50 states have passed memorializing resolutions asking Congress to pass the amendment and send it to the states for ratification.

"Surprisingly, this amendment has a lot of determined opposition in Congress," Rehbein said. "But I am an optimist. I believe if the American people let their representatives and senators know where they stand, Congress will have to pass it. I call on all members of The American Legion family to urge Congress to act."

With a current membership of 2.6 million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and the mentoring of youth. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

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