

Thaddeus J. Kobylarz
Flag Day Remarks
June 14, 2022

Good morning, and welcome to this 2022 commemoration of Flag Day.

Before I read this year's Flag Day Proclamation, I'd first like to share with you the story of the genesis of this celebration in Chatham Borough, as well as my own revelation about the inspiringly broad significance of Flag Day.

Four years ago, back in June of 2018, a group of Chatham Borough residents, each a US military veteran, approached me and asked why the Borough didn't then officially celebrate Flag Day. (One of those residents was my good friend, Retired U.S. Air Force Captain Herb Ramo, a Korean War era Veteran.) I responded that I honestly did not know, but that I'd look into the matter. And so, I began to research the holiday. And I was fascinated by what I soon discovered.

I learned, first of all, that a growing number of municipalities across the country are now celebrating Flag Day, a Congressionally recognized but still *non-Federal* holiday. I also learned that two states currently recognize Flag Day as a *state holiday*, namely Pennsylvania and Connecticut. (I do think New Jersey should be next!)

However, it was the underlying *reason* for this growing recognition of Flag Day that I found to be especially intriguing. You see, Flag Day is about *more* than just commemorating the tri-color banner that has come to symbolize our great nation. Flag Day is, of course, about celebrating the traditions and history associated with our nation's symbol – the red, white, and blue. But, Flag Day is equally about celebrating what the flag represents, namely the *values* and *principles* that have come to define this great nation of ours.

Indeed, for many, Flag Day is a day in which we are invited to reflect on the great American experiment in freedom; democracy; constitutional government; and the kind of open, diverse, and tolerant society we as a nation aspire to be; one defined by the distinctively American framework of rights guaranteed us by the Constitution via the Bill of Rights, and further articulated (and expanded) through two centuries of landmark Supreme Court decisions and inspired Congressional legislation, such as the admirably long line of Civil Rights Acts (most prominently, in my view, the Civil Rights Act of 1964).

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Most importantly, Flag Day is also a day in which we honor all those who have so bravely served, fought, and in innumerable cases, died, for the freedom and rights that we today cherish as Americans – each and every one of us.

In short, the true genius of Flag Day is that its significance is befittingly expansive and reflective of that which each and every one of us holds dear about this great nation of ours.

As the distinguished American abolitionist and social reformer Henry Ward Beecher once said:

“A thoughtful mind, when it sees a nation’s flag, sees not the flag only, but the nation itself; and whatever may be its symbols, its insignia, he reads chiefly in the flag: the government, the principles, the truths, and the history which belongs to the nation that sets it forth.”

Wise words indeed!

And now on to today’s Proclamation...