

Flag Etiquette

In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the House and Senate passed a resolution (*H.Con.Res 225*) expressing the sense of the Congress that as a symbol of solidarity, every American citizen is encouraged to display the flag of the United States for the thirty days following the attacks. Additionally, the House passed a resolution (*H.Res. 239*) providing Capitol-flown flags to each surviving victim and the family of each deceased victim of the terrorist attacks. Both resolutions have become effective.

The following are highlights of flag etiquette in federal law, as reported by the Congressional Research Service in CRS Report RL30243.

- When the flag is displayed horizontally or vertically against a wall, the union (i.e. the blue field) should always be in the **upper-left** corner from the perspective of the observer.
- When the flag is displayed horizontally or vertically *in a window*, the union should always be in the **upper-left** corner from the perspective of the observer in the street.
- The flag should never be displayed with the union down, except as a signal of extreme distress in an emergency that immediately threatens life and/or property.
- The flag should not be draped over the hood, top, sides, or back of a vehicle, railroad train, or boat.
- The flag should never touch anything beneath it (such as the floor, office equipment, or water).
- The flag should never be drawn back or bunched up in any way.
- The flag should never be used as a covering for a ceiling.
- The flag should never have placed upon it any mark, insignia, letter, word, figure, design, picture, or drawing of any kind.
- If displayed on a flagpole, the flag may be displayed 24 hours a day to achieve a patriotic effect, provided that the flag is illuminated during darkness hours.
- Only an all-weather flag should be displayed outdoors during bad weather.
- The flag should never be fastened, displayed, used, or stored in such a way as to invite damage.
- When a flag is no longer in a condition suitable for display, it should be destroyed in a dignified way. Burning a worn flag for the purpose of disposing of it **is** allowed.