June 9, 2006

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Bar Association, I write to urge you to vote against S. J. Res. 12, the proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States.

Few things are more offensive to most Americans than the desecration of our flag. But, as important as the flag is to all of us, we must never protect it at the expense of the constitutionally protected freedoms it symbolizes. One of our most precious rights is the right to express our dissatisfaction with our government through peaceful words or conduct, both of which are forms of political speech and protected under the First Amendment. S. J. Res. 12 would enshrine a restriction on our fundamental right to free speech in the very document that protects our individual liberties. For the first time in our nation’s history a fundamental right would be denied for future generations.

The Bill of Rights has remained honored and intact, even during great times of conflict and stress for our nation, for over 200 years. As James Madison once stated, amending the Constitution should be reserved for "great and extraordinary occasions.” Infrequent incidents of flag desecration do not warrant undermining the freedom of speech guaranteed under the First Amendment. If we were to desecrate our Constitution to protect the flag’s cloth from insult, we would do a great disservice to both.

All through human history, tyrannies have tried to enforce obedience by prohibiting disrespect for the symbols of their power. The American flag commands respect and love because of our country's adherence to its values and promise of freedom, not because of fiat and criminal law. America is not so fragile and our
citizens' patriotism is not so superficial that they must be upheld by the mandate of a constitutional amendment to protect the flag.

We urge you to defend and preserve our cherished constitutional freedoms by rejecting S.J. Res. 12.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Greco

Note: An individualized letter was sent to every Member of the Senate.