

FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES **THE “CODE FLAG” PROJECT**

On 24 June 1912 President William Howard Taft signed Executive Order 1556, a document that established official specifications for the Flag of the United States. This order has been modified over the years with respect to the arrangement and proportions of the stars, but the original aspect ratio for the overall flag, and the proportions pertaining to the Union (the canton, or “blue area” of the flag) remain unchanged. An official U.S. Flag has an aspect ratio of 1.9:1¹, or in layman's language, it is a little less than twice as long as it is wide. The Union extends outward 4/10 of the flag's length, and extends downward to the bottom of the 7th stripe. Executive Order 10834, signed into law by President Dwight David Eisenhower on 21 August 1959, is the document covering our 50-star flag. And on 7 July 1976, this order was incorporated into Public Law 94-344, making it the law of the land.

But most U.S. Flags sold today are the more “traditional” commercial varieties, such as 3' x 5', 4' x 6', 5' x 8', etc. While legal under the Flag Act of 1818, which is still recognized today, those sizes do not meet the current Flag Code. This is easily tested by dividing the length of a flag by its width; for example, a 3' x 5' flag has an aspect ratio of 1.67:1, not 1.9:1. Since there are no enforcement or penalty provisions in our Flag Code no harm is done by displaying them.

However, we, the undersigned, believe that local governments and schools should set an example for their citizens and students by displaying, on outdoor poles, a properly made Flag of the United States. We therefore urge you to make inventory of your outdoor flags and, at the next available opportunity, replace them with proper code flags if they do not meet the provisions of the Flag Code. Code flags are a little more expensive than “regular” commercial flags, but the difference in price is usually small, and they certainly would not break a budget. These flags may be found and purchased quite easily on-line from a variety of sources, and often local flag stores carry them. Just be sure to search or ask for “code flags,” “G-Spec flags,” or “flags conforming to the US Flag Code.”² Then choose a flag whose length is between ¼ to 1/3 the length of the pole upon which it is to be displayed.

For more information about this project please call Richard R. Gideon at 412-276-7689 or E-mail rrg@gideonflags.com

Signatories:

Richard R. Gideon, editor and publisher of American Vexillum Magazine

Dr. Peter Orenski, owner, TME Co., Inc.

Dr. Henry W. Moeller, Vexillologist, Author, “Unfurling the History of the Stars and Stripes”

Tom Martin, Vexillologist, owner, Piedmont Flag Co.

¹ The Flag Code allows a few sizes that do not conform to 1.9:1, usually for indoor “display” flags

² Complete definitions and specifications may also be found in DoD document DDD-F-416F