

## **FLAG RETIREMENT CEREMONY**

Tonight we honor the symbol of our American freedom, the American Flag as we retire her from duty. Please join me in the pledge of allegiance.

Recite the pledge:

The flag, otherwise known as “Old Glory,” the “Stars and Stripes,” or the “Star Spangled Banner” represents the land, the people, the government, and the ideas of the citizens of the United States of America. In 1942, congress passed the first U.S. code, which provides basic standards for honoring and presenting our flag. There is no set method for the retirement of the flag but it is generally known and strongly suggested that if the flag no longer adequately represents America that it be retired, preferably by burning. This that we have done and that we are about to do is “out of our utmost respect and undying honor” for the flag.

### **THIS IS YOUR FLAG**

On June 14, 1777 the Continental Congress resolved that: The official flag of the 13 colonies would be 13 stripes of alternating red and white with a blue field of 13 white stars. The stars on the blue field would symbolize a “new constellation.” In 1782, the Congress of Confederation recognized the meaning of each color on the flag.

The **RED** stripes symbolize hardiness and courage; the hardiness of the early pioneers, the courage of the common working man. As we retire the red colors, let us remember those who came before us.

(Place the red stripes on the fire—pause and let them burn for a short time before proceeding)

The **WHITE** stripes signify purity and innocence; the purity of the idealists who believe that each person is a child of God, and the innocence that one strives for in they life. As we retire the white colors, let us remember those who care for us and protect us from the enemy.

(Place the white stripes on the fire–pause and let them burn for a short time before proceeding)

The **BLUE** field is indicative of vigilance, perserverance, and justice; the vigilance to protect man’s freedoms, the perseverance that rejects all defeat, and the justice, the goal of free men everywhere. The stars on the field of blue embrace the fifty states as one, unified for the good of Mankind and Country. As we retired the blue colors let us ponder the future and what it holds.

(Place the field of blue on the fire–pause and let them burn for a short time before proceeding – add the threads and the brass pieces)

I am the flag that stands for the greatest nation on earth. I am no more than what you believe me to be, and I am all that you believe I can be. I am what you make me and nothing more. As long as men cherish liberty more than life itself, I shall continue to be the enduring banner of the United States of America. Look at her with renewed allegiance, honor her, respect her, and defend her.

The above retirement ceremony was researched by the 4-H Center Summer Staff in 1990 and is recognized by the United States Government, the Veterans

of Foreign Wars, and the four branches of the armed forces. In preparation for the retirement, the flag was completely unstitched. It was neither cut nor torn. Therefore the last part of the flag to be retired was the stitching that holds the flag together along with the two eyelets upon which the flag is hung. It is important to remember that flags are *retired by burning*, they are not burned.

*\* Lee Greenwood – God Bless The USA*

NOTES: remember that the flag can be unstitched by hand and the threads saved for the retirement ceremony. Do not cut the flag with scissors. This process should be done in private. It is not required to unstitch the flag, but the tradition at the Texas 4-H Center of unstitching the flag was approved by the American Legion.

Be sure to use a cotton flag, not a nylon one. The nylon will not burn very easily and can be a fire hazard!!! To make the cotton flag burn easier, soak the flag in kerosene after it has been taken apart. Wring out thoroughly and let air dry over night before burning. This will help the flag to catch and burn better – flags have a fire retardant on them which makes it difficult to burn unless they are soaked.