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TIME FOR NEW TERMS IN VEXILLOLOGY

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In almost all spheres of human endeavor, including the arts and sciences, greater complexity generally results from deeper understanding and practical experience over time. A century ago, a university might have considered physics a single area of academic endeavor, whereas today many independent (if interrelated) disciplines exist—atomic physics, biophysics, cryogenics, electrodynamics, molecular physics, nuclear physics, optics, particle physics, solid-state physics, thermodynamics, etc. Likewise different objectives and functions are today recognized as appropriate for the artist, museum curator, art dealer, conservator, art historian, and art patron.

When the editor and his colleague, Gary Grahl, published the first issue of *The Flag Bulletin* in October 1961, they introduced the term *vexillology* to refer to the study of flags. They felt that those concerned with the history and symbolism of flags needed a formal designation and a set of operating principles to differentiate them from those who promoted specific flags for political purposes (patriots) and those who made and sold flags (flag manufacturers and dealers).

Clearly, a spectrum of interests existed within vexillology, running from the young child excited by a color plate of flags in a dictionary to the professor of political science spending many years analyzing the development of one particular flag. In light of the modest number of flag-interested individuals around the world, however, it did not at the time seem necessary to make further distinctions.

As new institutions grew (congresses, associations, serials, etc.) the premise was made—which has always been adhered to since then—that vexillology must aspire to be an auxiliary discipline within the social sciences. Vexillologists must seek to ask and ultimately answer such questions as “How are large numbers of people influenced by flags to undertake activities contrary to the personal welfare of each, as when a soldier willingly presents himself as a target by carrying a flag toward the enemy?” The possibilities for success in this “academic vexillology” are suggested by two recent monographs published in *The Flag Bulletin* [Nos. 197 and 200].

From its early years, vexillology has been related to other areas of emphasis as well. For example, collecting flags and/or flag-related information (*vexillophily*) is recognized as a legitimate hobby similar to philately, battle reenactment, and hundreds of other pursuits. Those *vexillophiles* who pursue flags and flag information for their own personal enjoyment often amass large collections of flags, join vexillological associations, and sometimes write articles or deliver papers on a special area of interest. While they make no presumption to be considered as scholars, they also make no apology—nor should they—for being vexillophiles rather than academic vexillologists.

Much has changed in the past 40 years and it has become increasingly evident that specialized areas within the realm of general flag interest need to be explicitly recognized and more precisely defined. A recent article by an anonymous author (“Developmental Vexillology: A Way Forward?” *Flagmaster* No. 102, p. 5) and the creation of a Flag Design Committee by the North American Vexillological Association (NAVA) both suggest that the time is ripe for a hard look at the differences in focus, objectives, and operating principles characterizing discrete subdivisions of what has long generally been assumed to constitute a single entity—vexillology.

The author of the above-mentioned *Flagmaster* article has argued that “vexillologists must have a part in the work of designing new flags. They are the experts in flags, so they should not be missed when the flag is to be made.” The same premise is inherent in [Edward B.] Kaye’s *Good Flag, Bad Flag* which appears on the NAVA web site (nava.org). Thus in addition to academic vexillology and vexillophily, attention needs to be paid to *vexillography* (flag designing).

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LEGISLATURE ADOPTS MOTTO, FLAG DISPLAY LAW

Chapter 854, 2021 General and Special Laws of Texas

S.B. No. 797

In the Senate: Hughes

In the House: Oliverson, Huberty, Hefner, Anderson, Noble

AN ACT

relating to the display of the national motto in public schools and institutions of higher education.

Be It Enacted by The Legislature of the State of Texas:

SECTION 1. Section 1.004, Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 1.004. DISPLAY OF NATIONAL MOTTO. (a) A public elementary or secondary school or an institution of higher education as defined by Section 61.003 ~~must~~ *may* display in a conspicuous place in each building of the school or institution a durable poster or framed copy of the United States national motto, "In God We Trust," if the poster or framed copy meets the requirements of Subsection (b) and is:

(1) donated for display at the school or institution; or

(2) purchased from private donations and made available to the school or institution ~~[in each classroom, auditorium, and cafeteria].~~

(b) A poster or framed copy of the national motto described by Subsection (a):

(1) must contain a representation of the United States flag centered under the national motto and a representation of the state flag; and

(2) may not depict any words, images, or other information other than the representations listed in Subdivision (1).

(c) A public elementary or secondary school and an institution of higher education may accept and use private donations for the purposes of Subsection (a).

SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2021.

Passed Senate April 19, 2021: 31 ayes, 0 nays. Passed House May 25, 2021: 106 ayes, 35 nays, 4 P.N.V.

Approved June 16, 2021. Effective June 16, 2021.

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The phrase "In God We Trust" has been prominent in American public life since 1864, when it was first placed on an American coin. Since that time, it has been used in near-unbroken fashion on American coinage and became the official motto of the United States on July 30, 1956, when President Eisenhower signed Public Law 84-140.

After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, states began enacting legislation to allow or require the display of the national motto in public buildings, with an emphasis on public schools. According to a National Conference of State Legislatures report, 19 states had enacted such legislation by September 2019. Nine states allow the display of the motto, nine states require the display of the motto, and one state requires the display if the motto is donated. Texas law currently allows the display, and S.B. 797 will require the display if the motto is donated or purchased from private donations.

Senate Committee on State Affairs
April 8, 2021

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VEXILLOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE STATE OF TEXAS
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REPORT: FLAG, SYMBOL, OR RELATED LEGISLATION INTRODUCED IN THE 87TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE

This report lists selected measures related to flags, symbols, or related rituals and observances introduced in the Legislature for consideration during the 87th regular session. Searches for legislation may be considered at Texas Legislature Online: capitol.state.tx.us. Names of Republicans are in roman text; Democrats in *italic text*.

Flags:

Referred to the Senate Committee on Business & Commerce after House passage:

H.B. 2156 by Raymond, relating to the purchase of a United States flag or Texas flag by a governmental agency.

Flag rituals:

Referred to the House Committee on State Affairs.

H.B. 1836, by Holland, relating to the pledge of allegiance to the state flag.

H.B. 4318 by Smith, relating to amending the pledge of allegiance to the state flag.

Abolishing or redesignating Confederate Heroes Day:

Referred to the House Committee on State Affairs:

H.B. 36 by J. Johnson of Harris et al., relating to abolishing Confederate Heroes Day.

H.B. 219 by Thierry, relating to abolishing Confederate Heroes Day.

H.B. 2067 by Dominguez, relating to the creation and elimination of certain state holidays.

Referred to the Senate Committee on State Affairs:

S.B. 128 by Johnson, relating to the creation and elimination of certain state holidays.

Establishing new state holidays:

Referred to the House Committee on State Affairs:

H.B. 371 by Fierro et al., relating to the designation of the day after the Super Bowl as a state holiday.

H.B. 1198 by Metcalf et al., relating to the designation of Sam Houston Day as a state holiday.

H.B. 2157 by Raymond, relating to the designation of Women's Equality Day as a state holiday.

Referred to the Senate Committee on Business & Commerce after House passage:

H.B. 1231 by Moody et al., relating to the designation of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha as optional holidays.

Specifying new state symbols or designations:

Placed on the General State Calendar for floor consideration:

H.B. 4554 by Cain, Krause, Anderson, Sanford, and Shaheen, relating to the designation of Dr Pepper as the state soft drink.

Restricting monument removal, relocation, or alterations:

Referred to the House Committee on Culture, Recreation & Tourism:

H.B. 2571 by Slaton, Biedermann, Cain, King of Parker, Tinderholt, Vasut, relating to the removal, relocation, alteration, or construction of certain monuments or memorials located on public property.

Left pending after a public hearing by the House Committee on Culture, Recreation & Tourism:

H.B. 4538 by Cyrier, Middleton, relating to the removal, relocation, alteration, or construction of certain monuments or memorials located on municipal or county property; providing civil penalties.

Referred to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Economic Development:

S.B. 1416 by Creighton, Bettencourt, Buckingham, Campbell, Hall, Hughes, Kolkhorst, Paxton, Perry, Schwertner, Springer, relating to the removal, relocation, alteration, or construction of certain monuments, memorials, or designations located on public property; authorizing a civil penalty.

Placed on the General State Calendar for floor consideration:

H.B. 2713 by Hefner, White, Metcalf, Bell of Montgomery et al., relating to the removal, relocation, alteration, or construction of certain monuments, memorials, or designations located on public property; authorizing a civil penalty.

Effective on September 1, 2021:

H.B. 3584 by Murr (Senate Sponsor: Buckingham), relating to monuments, markers, medallions, and antiquities controlled by or in the custody of the Texas Historical Commission; authorizing civil penalties.



IN VEXILLOLOGY, ONE IS NOT BETTER THAN THE OTHER: FIG. 1: The flag of New Mexico. (Adopted 15 March 1925. *File image*. FIG. 2: The former flag of New Mexico (19 March 1915–15 March 1925), as illustrated in McCandless & Grosvenor, *Flags of the World* (1917). *File graphic*; *public domain illustration*.

ONLY THE STUDY OF FLAGS IS VEXILLOLOGY

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Proponents of flag designing often emphasize that “vexillologists are flag experts.” There is a fundamental flaw in this presumption, however, because flag-designing ultimately relies solely on personal judgment in the issues of “good designs” and “bad designs.” Academic vexillologists may be wrong in facts presented or in the analysis of those facts—for example in an examination of the political effectiveness of a particular flag and its relationship to the religious ethos of the society in which it is used. Nevertheless, science advances through the critical analysis of existing theories and of the accuracy of the facts on which they are based. All true science must be presented in the form of statements which can in principle be falsified rather than in terms of value judgements such as beauty, appropriateness, or distinctiveness of design.

Preference for one combination of symbols, colors, or designs in a given flag over any other alternative is always based on the feelings of the viewer and not on testable facts. Even a thousand people, all highly knowledgeable about flags and insisting that the current New Mexico state flag (Fig. 1) is better than the 1915-1925 design (Fig. 2), cannot prove that an individual who prefers the old flag is wrong. As Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura commented, relative to NAVA criticism of his state’s flag, “It’s kind of funny that someone can call themselves’ experts’ on something as subjective as judging aesthetics.”

This fundamental distinction between flags considered from the scientific point of view and flags considered from the design perspective in no way vitiates the value of developing good design principles and of promoting them among those who create and use flags. Just as the textile technician brings scientific knowledge to the conservation of an old flag while the museum curator relies on artistry to develop the most appealing way of displaying that flag for the public, so both vexillology and vexillography must be considered as legitimate undertakings.

It is time that the significant distinctions between different approaches to flags be reflected in appropriate terminology. To the existing categories of patriot, flag manufacturer or dealer, and vexillologist, the terms “vexillophile” and “vexillographer” and their cognates should be widely and consistently utilized in the community of all who profess interest in flags. Even when one person is involved in two or more of these areas, care should always be taken to utilize the right word in each circumstance. While differentiating among the terms vexillology, vexillophily, and vexillography is only a modest part of establishing the legitimacy and significance of these three related fields, it is crucial to the integrity of each.

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