

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 13-44—HB 6457

Veterans' Affairs Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING THE DISPLAY OF THE STATE OR NATIONAL FLAG AT HALF-STAFF AND THE PLACEMENT OF FLAGS ON CEMETERY GRAVES PRIOR TO MEMORIAL DAY

SUMMARY: This act makes changes affecting the display of U.S. and state flags at (1) half-staff following the death of certain government officials, citizens, or armed forces members and (2) veterans' graves before Memorial Day.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except the provision concerning U.S. flags displayed at veterans' graves is effective October 1, 2013.

DISPLAY OF FLAGS AT HALF-STAFF

The act conforms state law to federal law by authorizing the governor to issue a proclamation ordering the national flag to be flown at half-staff following the death of (1) a present or former principal figure of state government or (2) an armed forces member from Connecticut who dies in the line of duty. When the governor issues such a proclamation, the state flag must also be flown at half-staff.

The act also authorizes the governor to issue a proclamation ordering that the state flag alone be flown at half-staff following the death of a state official or prominent citizen.

After the governor issues either type of proclamation, the act requires all state government buildings and offices, public schools, and military bases to fly the national and state flags in accordance with the order.

Prior law required the governor to order that the national flag be flown at half-staff after he or she ordered that the state flag be flown at half-staff following the death of an armed forces member who dies in the line of duty.

The act defines "armed forces" as the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, or any reserve component thereof, including the Connecticut National Guard performing certain federal duty (e.g., Homeland Security missions).

PLACEMENT OF FLAGS ON VETERANS' GRAVES

Prior law prohibited towns, cemetery associations, and ecclesiastical societies that care for cemeteries from enacting bylaws that restrict U.S. flags' display at veterans' graves from the Saturday before Memorial Day until the Monday following the 4th of July. The act lengthens this period by one day, beginning it on the Friday before Memorial Day.

BACKGROUND

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

Federal Flag Code

The federal Flag Code codifies rules and customs for the display and care of the U.S. flag. Among other things, the code authorizes state governors to issue proclamations ordering that the national flag be flown at half-staff following the death of a (1) present or former state government official or (2) state armed forces member who dies in the line of duty. After a governor issues such a proclamation, each federal installation or facility should fly its national flag at half-staff. When the national flag is flown at half-staff, state and local flags must also be flown at half-staff (4 USC § 7).

OLR Tracking: DL:KS:PF:RO