

3611 Lowell Street Northwest
Washington, D. C.

June 8, 1953

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

1. In compliance with your personal request the following data are submitted showing that the arrangement of the stars in the United States flag has always been a function of the Executive branch of the government.

2. The arrangement or position of the stars is not specified in any of the three laws passed on the design of the flag; nor in the codification of the law on the flag enacted by the 80th Congress. This detail has always been left to the Executive branch of the government. (Copies of the laws are attached, Exhibits A, B, C, D.)

Adding 2 Stars in 1912

3. When 2 additional stars were required in 1912 to represent New Mexico and Arizona, the Navy Department wrote the War Department suggesting that a joint board of Army and Navy officers consider and recommend the position of the stars in the field. There are enclosed two photostats which I procured from the National Archives showing the letter from the Joint Board signed by Admiral George Dewey, recommending the position of the stars and the signature of the President approving the recommendation (Exhibit E). I note that the date of the President's approval was filled in by hand when he signed it on the day Arizona was admitted, the arrangement of the stars having been decided upon previously.

The other photostat is the letter from the Secretary to the President to the Acting Secretary of the Navy, transmitting the above approval of the President (Exhibit F).

4. Following this approval by the President, a formal Executive Order was issued on June 24, 1912, and a slight revision to cover small boat flags was issued in Executive Order No. 1637 of October 29, 1912. In this order the President referred to the law of 1818 (Exhibit C) that established the flag. He directed the Navy Department to furnish blue-prints of the arrangement of the stars to other departments. It is important to note that this executive order provided that "All national flags and union jacks now on hand for which contracts have been awarded shall be continued in use until unserviceable." Upon inquiring recently at the departments I was informed that there are on hand now flags valued as follows:

Navy, the largest user of flags and union jacks, \$1,477,841.70.

Quartermaster General's purchases for Army and Air Force, \$1,257,117.40. This large amount in the hands of the Quartermaster General is due to the extensive purchases during World War II. In addition there are lesser amounts held in stock by Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and the General Services Administration.

How 1 star was added in 1908

5. Oklahoma was admitted on November 16, 1907. In this case the arrangement of the stars was decided without presidential executive order. The Navy Department wrote the War Department suggesting that officers of the Army and Navy meet to recommend a design. The board met and recommended a design which had been submitted by the Navy. The report signed by Admiral Dewey as senior member of the board is attached (Exhibits G & H).

The War and Navy Departments made their flags in accordance with this design' and other departments followed this without Executive Order.

Prior to these last two changes in the flag, the services arranged the stars without executive order or legislation, but followed the general basic law of 1818 (Exhibit C), which required the addition of a star on the 4th of July next succeeding admission of a new State.

Sometimes the Army arranged the correct number of stars to form one great star; and for a considerable period, nearly up to the Mexican War, and on a few flags in that war, they carried in the canton an eagle surrounded by the correct number of stars. They also used the horizontal row arrangement of the stars that was generally used in the Navy. But the arrangement was never prescribed by legislation.

7. On March 11, 1953, a Concurrent Resolution (Exhibit I), was introduced in the House of Representatives, as H. Con. Res. 78 by Mrs. Frances P. Bolton (Ohio), providing for a joint congressional committee to design the flag whenever the 49th state is admitted. It was referred to the Committee on Rules.

8. On March 31, 1953, Mr. Price introduced a Bill, H. R. 4359, in the House to provide by law certain duties for the Quartermaster General (Exhibit J). Among other things it gives to the Quartermaster General the design of the National flag. All three of the armed services are so greatly interested sentimentally and patriotically in the flag that they would not surrender willingly this important and pleasant duty to the Quartermaster General.

9. Following former custom when new stars were to be added to the flag, the Secretary of the Navy, on April 16, 1953, wrote to the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Air Force suggesting that the three armed services form a board to recommend the arrangement of the stars in the flag and in the union jack. The Secretary of the Army, I believe, did not favor having a board because of the existence of the Bolton resolution.

10. If I may suggest, a board of Army, Navy, and Air Force officers should consider designs and recommend one or more for the President's approval, as was done in previous cases, in ample time prior to the admission of a new state, and before persons not charged with that duty concern themselves unnecessarily.

11. There are many possible arrangements of 49 stars and of 50 stars. Some are shown on drawings enclosed herewith.

Very sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wm. Rea Furlong". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Wm. Rea Furlong
Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy (Ret.)

P.S.

I have often thought of your very deep concern over the course to take in Korea. Although as Commander in Chief of the Military Order of World Wars I immediately wrote to Mr. Truman giving the Order's endorsement of his going promptly to the support of the U. N. in Korea, I later came to the conclusion that for very many reasons, all of which are well known to you, it was time for us to draw out, particularly with reluctant allies. Your letter to Syngman Rhee as quoted in today's press is most heartening.

A handwritten signature consisting of the initials "WRF" in a cursive style.

WRF