Supervisor Romaine and Councilman Panico Join Dayton Elementary School Students for Annual Celebration of Flag Day

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Farmingville, NY - On June 14, Supervisor Ed Romaine and Councilman Dan Panico joined students of Dayton Avenue School in celebration of Flag Day. The students were outstanding in their speeches and musical performances.

The flag, as symbol of the nation, has a meaning and a function beyond what individual citizens make of it. Like its birthday, the American flag is unusual, both in looks and significance. Its composition symbolically reflects the enduring idea and ideal of E Pluribus Unum, as well as our evolving national history. As everyone knows, the 13 stripes, alternating red and white, stand for the 13 original colonies and states; each of the 50 stars, white on a field of blue, stands for one of the current 50 states; the constellation of 50 stars standing for the United States as a whole--one out of many. As each new state was added to the Union, the number of stars increased in parallel, but the 13 stripes and the overall structure and colors have (almost always) remained the same. There have been 27 different "official" versions of the American flag, from the so-called Betsy Ross flag of 1777, to the (unique) 15-star, 15-stripe flag about which Francis Scott Key wrote his famous poem, to the current and longest-used flag, adopted on July 4, 1960, after Hawaii was admitted to the Union.

The flag first served mainly as a military ensign, maritime symbol, or mark of American territory. It began to acquire its iconic character only when it became the symbol of the Union, after the Confederate firing on Fort Sumter in April 1861. Its standing among us was further increased with the composition in 1892, by Francis Bellamy, of the Pledge of Allegiance, first recited by school children across America later that year in celebration of Columbus Day. In 1931, more than a century after it was written and only after much debate, Congress made "The Star-Spangled Banner" our national anthem--an exceptional anthem for an exceptional nation: The anthem of no other major nation, as far as we know, is about the national flag.

As with other nations, the flag is the preeminent symbol of our nation (more so than the other two symbols: the eagle and the Great Seal of the United States). It is displayed from public buildings, private homes, ships at sea, and embassies abroad, always in a manner governed by defined protocol. It is waved and saluted on ceremonial occasions, lowered to half-staff to mark the deaths of national leaders or national tragedies, and draped over the

coffins of those who have fallen in the nation's defense. Most of us obey the (unenforced) law that prohibits turning the flag into an article of clothing or otherwise desecrating the flag. Flag burning, though said by the Supreme Court to be a form of protected "speech," raises the ire of most of our fellow citizens-- and quite properly so. For the flag, as symbol of the nation, has a meaning and a function beyond what individual citizens make of it.

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