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Sign with insertable frame

Abstract

A sign having a display section and a support member that can be removably secured to the display section. The support may be secured within a pocket or receptacle formed in the display section. The pocket may be created in the display section by portions of adhesive, including hot melt adhesive and pressure sensitive adhesive. The pocket allows a smaller support member than conventional wire frames while holding the display section above the ground at a height similar to conventional frames.

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Background/Summary

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS (1) This application is a continuation of co-pending application Ser. No. 17/731,001, filed Apr. 27, 2022, titled SIGN WITH INSERTABLE FRAME, which claims the benefit of U.S. provisional application Ser. No. 63/180,554, filed Apr. 27, 2021, titled SIGN WITH INSERTABLE FRAME.

FIELD

(1) The present invention relates generally to signage. More specifically, the invention relates to a yard sign having a display section with first and second panels fastened together and a supporting frame that is insertable into the display section and securable thereto. The frame and display section can be joined by an end-user prior to use.

BACKGROUND

(2) Ground-based signage is a popular method of communicating with passersby. There are various types of ground-based signs, but one type that is widely used is a wire-frame sign that can be placed in residential yards or commercial lawns. Such signs are relatively inexpensive and easy to install, which has helped increase their popularity. They are ubiquitous during elections, often used to show support for candidates, and they have become a popular way of offering congratulations for birthdays, anniversaries, and school graduations. One of the benefits of using a yard sign is visibility. They are highly visible, in part, because they are supported well above the ground by a

wire frame. Traditionally, the frame consists of a single piece of wire bent to form two vertical legs joined by a horizontal upper member.

(3) Wire-frame signs are not without drawbacks. In order to provide performance and durability, manufacturers have tended to maximize the amount of wire used for the frame. Also, yard signs typically require a frame having a vertical dimension that is much greater than the vertical dimension of the sign it supports. This is necessary to ensure that the sign is positioned well above the ground while still allowing a portion of the frame to be inserted into the ground. This large wire frame can make packaging and shipping the product difficult and expensive. It can also be challenging to keep costs down when mass producing such signs and frames due to their size and shape.

(4) A need exists for a yard sign that offers the durability and low cost expected by consumers, but is also easy to package and ship economically. The present invention addresses that need.

SUMMARY

(5) The present invention comprises a sign having a display section and a support member, such as a frame, that can be removably secured to the display section. In one embodiment, the display section and support member have similar dimensions, making the two components easier to package and ship than traditional wire-frame signs. Additionally, as described in more detail below, the unique support member design may be smaller than a conventional wire frame, which decreases the amount of material needed to support the display section. The support may be secured within a pocket or receptacle formed in the display section. The pocket allows the smaller support member to hold the display section above the ground at a height similar to conventional frames.

(6) The display section may include a first panel and a second panel, with both panels joined by an adhesive or a heat sealing or fusing method. The first and second panels may be attached at a crease. For example, the display section may include a singular piece of material, such as cardboard, that is folded at a crease with the first and second panels being on opposite sides of the crease. The pocket or receptacle may be formed in the display section between the first and second panels, with the pocket being formed between at least two portions of adhesive, such as hot melt adhesive and/or pressure sensitive adhesive. The display section may also include one or more securing mechanisms, such as a piece of pressure sensitive adhesive, located between the first and second panels to selectively secure the first and second panels together. Pressure sensitive adhesive can also serve the purpose of adhering to or gripping the wire or frame support member to help keep it engaged with the display section.

(7) The securing mechanism may be located proximate the periphery of the pocket or offset inwardly from the periphery toward the middle of the pocket. If the securing mechanism is offset from the periphery, the mechanism can be used to form a retention cavity within the pocket for holding or gripping a portion of the support member (also referred to herein as a frame). The cavity may be formed after the support member is inserted in the pocket to essentially lock a portion of the support member in the cavity, which holds the support member in the pocket. By holding the support member in the pocket, the display section remains engaged with the support member and resists separation when encountering wind, rain, or other outdoor elements. This unique configuration allows the support member and display section to be packaged and shipped in a disassembled state. An end-user can then join the support member and display section prior to use.

(8) The securing mechanism may take a number of forms including a piece or dollop of pressure sensitive adhesive, which may also be referred to as a full pressure sensitive hot melt adhesive or a butyl-type adhesive. The securing mechanism could also take the form of a fastener such as a hook and loop fastener, snap, threaded fastener, tied fastener, pin or any other fastener suitable for joining panels.

(9) The support member or frame portion may have an upper portion adapted for insertion into the pocket and a lower portion adapted for insertion into the ground. In an exemplary embodiment, the lower portion comprises two wires, however other materials and configurations are foreseen such

as rods or legs made out of metal, wood or plastic. The upper portion of the support member may contact a first piece of pressure sensitive adhesive when inserted in the pocket or receptacle. The first piece of pressure sensitive adhesive may be located closer than the upper portion of the support member to the crease when the support member is inserted into the pocket. There may also be a second piece of pressure sensitive adhesive, which may be located farther than the upper portion of the support member from the crease when the support member is inserted into the pocket.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- (1) FIG. 1 is a front view of an embodiment of a sign with a removably securable frame.
- (2) FIG. 2 is a front view of the sign of FIG. 1 with the display section in the open position.
- (3) FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view of the sign of FIG. 1 taken along line 3-3 in FIG. 1.
- (4) FIG. 4 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a sign with a removably securable frame.
- (5) FIG. 5 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a sign with a removably securable frame.
- (6) FIG. 6 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a sign with a removably securable frame.
- (7) FIG. 7 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a sign with a removably securable frame.
- (8) FIG. 8 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a sign with a removably securable frame.
- (9) FIG. 9 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a sign with a removably securable frame.
- (10) FIG. 10 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a sign with a removably securable frame.
- (11) FIG. 11 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a sign with a removably securable frame.
- (12) FIG. 12 is a front view of a sign with a removably securable frame prepared for packaging.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

(13) As required, detailed embodiments of the present invention are disclosed herein; however, it is to be understood that the disclosed embodiments are merely exemplary of the invention, which may be embodied in various forms. Therefore, specific structural and functional details disclosed herein are not to be interpreted as limiting, but merely as a basis for the claims and as a representative basis for teaching one skilled in the art to variously employ the present invention in virtually any appropriately detailed structure. The drawings constitute a part of this specification and include exemplary embodiments of the present invention and illustrate various objects and features thereof.

(14) Certain terminology will be used in the following description for convenience in reference only and will not be limiting. For example, the words “upwardly,” “downwardly,” “rightwardly,” “leftwardly,” “upper,” and “lower” will refer to the installed position of the item to which the reference is made. The words “inwardly” and “outwardly” will refer to directions toward and away from, respectively, the geometric center of the embodiment being described and designated parts thereof. Said terminology will include the words specifically mentioned, derivatives thereof and words of a similar import.

(15) As best seen in FIGS. 1 and 2, an exemplary embodiment of the invention comprises a sign **100** having a display section **102**, a receptacle or pocket **140** formed in the display section **102**, a

support or frame **150**, and a securing mechanism **133** located proximate pocket **140**.

(16) As shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**, display section **102** may include two rigid or semi-rigid panels, a first panel **110** and a second panel **120**, with both panels joined together at their respective peripheries. It is foreseen that first panel **110** and second panel **120** may be constructed of cardboard, plastic, or other suitable materials known in the art. The top of first panel **110** and the top of second panel **120** may be joined by adhesion, welding, or by folding a single large piece of material in half to form a joined top **105**. If a single piece of material is folded, the joined top **105** may be in the form of a crease. Similarly, a first edge **124a** of first panel **110** and a first edge **124b** of second panel **120** may be joined together, and the second edge **126a** of first panel **110** and second edge **126b** of second panel **120** may be joined together. The first and second edges may be joined using an adhesive such as a thermoplastic hot glue or a pressure sensitive adhesive.

Perimeter beads or strips of adhesive **130** (e.g., thermoplastic hot glue or pressure sensitive adhesive) may be applied to an interior face of a panel and then used to bond the panels together.

(17) As shown in the figures, strips of adhesive **130** may be applied during the manufacturing process to the first panel **110** near its first edge **124a** and second edge **126a**. If hot melt adhesive is used, the second panel **120** may be pressed against first panel **110** at the locations of the strips **130** before the hot melt adhesive solidifies such that the hot melt adhesive bonds the panels together as it cools. While the first and second edges may be bonded using an adhesive, it is foreseen that they may be joined in other ways such as stapling, riveting, or other fasteners. The first and second edges could also be folded.

(18) As best seen in FIGS. **1-11**, sign **100** may include a receptacle or pocket **140** formed in display section **102**. Pocket **140** is located between first panel **110** and second panel **120** and adapted to receive an upper portion **160** of a support or frame **150**. Various embodiments of pocket **140** and frame **150** will be discussed in more detail below, however one embodiment may include a generally rectangular pocket **140** for receiving an upper portion **160** of a frame **150**. As shown in FIGS. **2, 4, 5** and **6**, pocket **140** may include strips of adhesive that form the border of pocket **140**. These border strips of adhesive **132** may take the form of hot melt (e.g., thermoplastic hot glue) or pressure sensitive adhesive located on the sides, corners and/or top of pocket **140**. Like the edge strips of adhesive **130**, the border strips **132** may be applied during the manufacturing process to the first panel **110**. The border strips of adhesive **132** may be applied at the same time as the edge strips of adhesive **130**. The second panel **120** may be pressed against first panel **110** at the locations of the border strips **132** and edge strips **130** to bond the panels together. It is foreseen that other mechanisms could also be used to form a border of pocket **140** such as stapling, riveting, or other fasteners.

(19) As shown in the figures, receptacle or pocket **140** may be shaped to approximate an upper portion **160** of frame **150**. The periphery of pocket **140** may be created by the first and second panels **110** and **120** being bonded by the border strips of adhesive **132**. A portion of the periphery of pocket **140** is formed at the location where the panels are bonded together. Accordingly, the size and shape of pocket **140** may be dictated by the orientations of the border strips of adhesive **132**. For example, as shown in FIGS. **5-6**, border strips of adhesive **132** may be located on the sides and top of pocket **140**. The side strips restrict lateral movement of the frame **150** within pocket **140** and the top strips restrict upward movement of the frame **150**. This configuration allows display section **102** to be engaged with frame **150** by receiving frame **150** within pocket **140**. Additional embodiments are discussed below.

(20) Frame **150** may comprise two legs **125** extending downwardly from an upper horizontal member **151**. Each leg **125** may be a relatively slender rod or segment of wire with sufficient strength to keep sign **100** upright. Once installed, sign **100** could encounter various outdoor elements including wind, rain and snow. Each leg **125** is constructed to keep sign **100** generally upright when such elements are encountered. Sign **100** may be designed such that the legs **125** flex somewhat, such as if blown by wind or hit by a person or object. However, each leg is relatively

resilient and can return sign **100** to its upright position after being flexed. Legs **125** can be constructed of various types of materials (e.g., plastic, metal, wood, or composite), however it is foreseen that leg members **125** made of heavy-duty wire (e.g., spring steel wire) would be suitable for many applications. Each leg **125** may be long enough to be inserted into the ground while still holding the display section **102** in a spaced configuration with respect to the ground. For example, in one embodiment, display section **102** may be supported approximately two feet above the ground.

(21) Legs **125** may extend downwardly from opposite ends of horizontal member **151**. The length of horizontal member **151** may be such that the width of frame **150** closely approximates the width of pocket **140**. Horizontal member **151** may be constructed of the same material as the legs **25** or it may be constructed of a different material. It is foreseen that heavy-duty wire (e.g., spring steel wire) may be a suitable material for the horizontal member **151** in many applications. In an exemplary embodiment, a single piece of heavy-duty wire may be fashioned into the legs **125** and horizontal member **151** by bending the wire into an inverted U-shape with generally squared-off corners (FIGS. **1**, **2**, **4-6**, **10-12**).

(22) As shown in FIGS. **1-7**, **10**, and **11**, sign **100** may also include one or more securing mechanisms **133** located proximate pocket **140**. Securing mechanism **133** may take the form of a piece or dollop of adhesive, such as a pressure sensitive adhesive, which may also be referred to as a full pressure sensitive hot melt adhesive or a butyl-type adhesive. The pieces could be strips of material or double-sided tape. The adhesive may be partially or completely applied during the manufacturing process. A securing mechanism **133** in the form of adhesive may also serve the purpose of adhering to frame **150** when inserted into pocket **140** to help keep the frame engaged with display section **102**. Securing mechanism **133** may also take the form of a fastener such as a hook and loop fastener, snap, threaded fastener, tied fastener, pin or any other fastener suitable for joining panels.

(23) The securing mechanism **133** may be located proximate the periphery of pocket **140** or offset inwardly from the periphery toward the middle of pocket **140**. If the securing mechanism **133** is offset from the periphery, in certain embodiments, the mechanism can be used to form a retention cavity **180** within the pocket **140** for holding a portion of frame **150**. Cavity **180** is identified on the figures by showing the location where it would exist when the first and second panels **110** and **120** are joined together. The cavity **180** may be formed after frame **150** is inserted into pocket **140** to trap an upper portion **160** of frame **150** in the cavity **180**, thereby holding frame **150** in pocket **140**. Holding frame **150** in pocket **140** helps display section **102** remain engaged with frame **150** when faced with outdoor elements such as wind.

(24) As shown in FIGS. **1-4**, an exemplary embodiment of the invention comprises a generally rectangular pocket **140** having border strips of adhesive **132** on the sides of the pocket and a plurality of securing mechanisms **133** at the top of the pocket. The securing mechanisms **133** in FIGS. **1** and **2** may take the form of pieces of pressure sensitive adhesive (e.g., butyl-type adhesive). As best seen in FIG. **3**, when frame **150** is inserted into pocket **140**, an upper portion **160** of the frame may contact and adhere to the securing mechanisms **133**. Adhesion of frame **150** to securing mechanism **133** helps keep the display section **102** engaged with the frame **150** when faced with wind, severe weather, or other adverse conditions. A lower portion **170** of frame **150** may be inserted into the ground. Sign **100** may be substantially constructed by a manufacturer, with an end user simply inserting frame **150** into a display section **102** prior to use. As shown in FIG. **12**, frame **150** and display section **102** may be stacked in a disassembled state for packaging, and then shipped to a user for assembly. Additional embodiments of the invention are shown in FIGS. **5-11**.

(25) FIG. **5** illustrates an embodiment where display section **102** includes a generally rectangular pocket **140** having border strips of adhesive **132** on the sides and the top of the pocket. A securing mechanism **133** is offset downwardly from the top of pocket **140**. The securing mechanism **133**

may be a piece or dollop of pressure sensitive adhesive (e.g., butyl type adhesive). The securing mechanism **133** can be used to form a retention cavity **180** within pocket **140** for holding an upper portion **160** of frame **150**. The cavity may be formed around the upper portion **160** after the frame is inserted into the pocket **140**.

(26) The sign **100** embodied in FIG. 5 may be constructed in stages. The first stage is construction by a manufacturer. The first and second panels **110** and **120** may be bonded by a manufacturer using the edge strips **130** and border strips **132** of adhesive to form display section **102**. Securing mechanism **133** may also be applied in pocket **140** by the manufacturer. The securing mechanism **133** may be adhered to one or both of the panels when sign **100** is received by a customer. The second stage of construction may be done by an end-user. To assemble sign **100**, a user can separate the portions of panels **110** and **120** in the pocket **140**, including separating one of the panels from securing mechanism **133**, and insert frame **150** into the pocket such that an upper portion **160** travels past or above securing mechanism **133**. The upper portion **160** of frame **150** may then be located in the cavity **180** section of pocket **140**. The user may press the panels **110** and **120** together at the location of the securing mechanism **133** thereby securing the panels together at that location and trapping the upper portion **160** within cavity **180**. At this point, frame **150** resists separating from display section **102** because its upper portion **160** is trapped in cavity **180**. The sign **100** is ready for use by inserting lower portion **170** of frame **150** into the ground.

(27) FIG. 6 illustrates an embodiment similar to FIG. 5, except that the securing mechanism **133** is a strip of double-sided tape with one side adhered to a panel and the other side covered with a release liner or backing film. The sign **100** may be shipped to an end-user with the securing mechanism **133** partially covered by a release liner, and the end-user may peel off the liner to expose the adhesive when it is time to form cavity **180**.

(28) FIG. 7 illustrates an embodiment where display section **102** includes a generally rectangular pocket **140** having border strips of adhesive **132** on the sides of the pocket. In this embodiment, there is no adhesive forming a top of the pocket. A securing mechanism **133** is located between the side border strips **132** and it may be downwardly spaced from the tops of the strips. The securing mechanism **133** may be a piece or dollop of pressure sensitive adhesive (e.g., butyl-type adhesive) or a piece of double-sided tape. The securing mechanism **133** can be used to form a stop when it is adhered to both panels **110** and **120**, which can keep the upper portion **160** of frame **150** from moving downward past the securing mechanism thereby keeping frame **150** from retracting out of pocket **140**. Frame **150** may include horizontal segments **190** on one or both of legs **125** that catch on the bottoms of border strips **132**. When the horizontal segments **190** catch on the strips **132**, the frame **150** resists further insertion into pocket **140**. Accordingly, the horizontal segments **190** engage with strips **132** to keep the frame **150** from moving too far into pocket **140**, and securing mechanism **133** keeps the frame **150** from retracting out of pocket **140** once the upper portion **160** is inserted past the securing mechanism **133**.

(29) Like other embodiments, the sign **100** shown in FIG. 7 may be constructed in stages. The first stage is construction by a manufacturer. The first and second panels **110** and **120** may be bonded by a manufacturer using the edge strips **130** and border strips **132** of adhesive to form display section **102**. Securing mechanism **133** may also be applied in pocket **140** by the manufacturer. The securing mechanism **133** may be adhered to one or both of the panels when sign **100** is received by a customer. The second stage of construction may be done by an end-user. To assemble sign **100**, a user can separate the portions of panels **110** and **120** in the pocket **140**, including separating one of the panels from securing mechanism **133**, and insert frame **150** into the pocket such that an upper portion **160** travels past or above securing mechanism **133**. The horizontal segments **190** on legs **125** may be located such that they do not catch on strips **132** until upper portion **160** is properly located above securing mechanism **133**. The user would not need to monitor the location of upper portion **160** in pocket **140** and could instead rely on the fact that the horizontal segments **190** will stop insertion of the frame **150** into pocket **140** when upper portion **160** is properly located.

The user may then press the panels **110** and **120** together at the location of the securing mechanism **133** thereby securing the panels together at that location and trapping the upper portion **160** within display section **102**. At this point, frame **150** resists separating from display section **102** because its upper portion **160** is stopped from retracting from pocket **140** by the securing mechanism **133**. The sign **100** is ready for use by inserting lower portion **170** of frame **150** into the ground.

(30) FIGS. **8** and **9** illustrates an embodiment where display section **102** includes two smaller, generally parallel pockets **140**. Each pocket **140** has border strips of adhesive **132** on the sides of the pocket. In this embodiment, there is no adhesive forming tops of the pockets. Frames **150a** have an upper portion **160**, such as a vertical member, that may be inserted into each pocket **140**. The frames **150a** shown in FIGS. **8** and **9** may also utilize horizontal segments **190** attached to or formed in one or both of legs **125** that catch on the bottoms of border strips **132**. When the horizontal segments **190** catch on the strips **132**, the frame **150a** resists further insertion into pocket **140**, ensuring that the frame **150a** does not move too far into pocket **140**. The frame **150a** shown in FIG. **8**, may be referred to as an H-style frame, and the frame **150a** shown in FIG. **9** comprises two un-joined legs **125**. It is foreseen that the signs **100** shown in FIGS. **8** and **9** may or may not utilize a securing mechanism **133**. The signs **100** may be substantially constructed by a manufacturer, with an end user simply inserting frames **150a** into a display section **102** prior to use. Pockets **140** may be shaped and sized such that the upper portion **160** of frame **150a** received within each pocket is held snugly by friction.

(31) FIGS. **10** and **11** illustrate embodiments similar to the signs in FIGS. **1-4**. Certain adhesive strips shown in FIGS. **10** and **11** comprise pressure sensitive adhesive (e.g., butyl-type adhesive) rather than thermoplastic hot glue. Turning first to FIG. **10**, the sign **100** shown in this figure may utilize pressure sensitive adhesive for all strips around pocket **140**. By making all strips on the periphery of pocket **140** out of pressure sensitive adhesive, all of the strips function as securing mechanisms **133**. Frame **150** may be inserted into pocket **140** until it contacts one or more of the securing mechanisms **133**, at which point it can adhere to the securing mechanism **133** (as shown in FIG. **3**). It is foreseen that, depending on the size and shape of pocket **140**, frame **150** may contact and adhere to one or more (or even all) of the securing mechanisms **133** shown in FIG. **10**. As explained above, adhesion of frame **150** to securing mechanism **133** helps the keep the display section **102** engaged with the frame **150** when faced with wind, severe weather, or other adverse conditions. Turning to FIG. **11**, the sign **100** shown in this figure may utilize pressure sensitive adhesive for all strips around pocket **140** like the sign in FIG. **10**, but it may also use pressure sensitive adhesive for all edge strips **130**. This would eliminate thermoplastic hot glue entirely from sign **100**, which may have manufacturing benefits.

(32) It is to be understood that while certain forms of the present invention have been illustrated and described herein, it is not to be limited to the specific forms or arrangement of parts described and shown.

Claims

1. A sign comprising: a display section having a first panel and a second panel; a first adhesive distributed between and adhered to an interior surface of each of said first and second panels to secure the panels together to form a pocket therebetween, the pocket having an opening along a bottom edge of the joined panels; a wire support member removably securable to said display section, said support member having an upper portion adapted for insertion into said pocket; and a securing mechanism, comprising a first piece of pressure sensitive adhesive, positioned between and secured to each of said first and second panels; wherein the securing mechanism is positioned such that at least a portion of the wire support member when inserted into the pocket contacts the securing mechanism such that simultaneous contact of the securing mechanism, the wire support member, and each of the first and second panels forms a structural connection that retains the wire

- support member within the pocket and maintains alignment of the first and second panels.
2. The sign of claim 1, wherein said support member comprises a lower portion adapted for insertion into the ground.
3. The sign of claim 2, wherein said lower portion of said support member comprises at least one linear member.
4. The sign of claim 1, wherein the securing mechanism comprises a plurality of pieces of pressure sensitive adhesive.
5. The sign of claim 4, wherein said pocket is formed positioned between said plurality of pieces of pressure sensitive adhesive.
6. The sign of claim 1, wherein the first adhesive comprises a pressure sensitive adhesive.
7. A sign comprising: a display section having a first panel and a second panel; a receptacle formed in said display section between said first and second panels when said first and second panels are attached together by an adhesive; a securing mechanism, comprising a piece of pressure sensitive adhesive positioned between and secured to said first and second panels; and a support adapted for insertion into said receptacle such that at least part of said support contacts said securing mechanism when inserted in said receptacle such that simultaneous contact between the securing mechanism, the support, and each of the first and second panels forms a structural connection that retains the support within the receptacle and maintains alignment of the first and second panels.
8. The sign of claim 7, wherein said first and second panels are attached at a crease.
9. The sign of claim 8, wherein said support comprises an upper portion and a lower portion.
10. The sign of claim 9, wherein said lower portion of said support is adapted for insertion into the ground.
11. The sign of claim 10, wherein said support mechanism is positioned to contact said upper portion of said support when said support is inserted in said receptacle.
12. A sign comprising: a display section having a first panel and a second panel attached at a crease; a first adhesive distributed between and adhered to an interior surface of each of said first and second panels to secure the panels when folded together at the crease to form a pocket therebetween, the pocket having an opening along a bottom edge of the joined panels; and a support member removably securable to said display section, said support member having a lower portion adapted for insertion into the ground and an upper portion adapted for insertion into said pocket, wherein at least part of said support member when inserted into the pocket contacts a securing mechanism comprising at least one piece of pressure sensitive adhesive positioned between and secured to each of said first and second panels such that simultaneous contact of the securing mechanism, the support member, and each of the first and second panels forms a structural connection that retains the support member within the pocket and maintains alignment of the first and second panels.
13. The sign of claim 12, wherein said lower portion of said support member comprises at least one linear member.
14. The sign of claim 13, wherein said pocket is positioned between at least two pieces of said pressure sensitive adhesive.
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