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[21581001]

The Senate rejected a constitutional amendment that President Bush sought to protect the U.S. flag from desecration .

[21581003]

The vote , in which 11 GOP lawmakers voted against Mr. Bush 's position , was a victory for Democratic leaders , who opposed the amendment as an intrusion on the Bill of Rights .

[21581004]

" We can support the American flag without changing the American Constitution , " said Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell of Maine .

[21581006]

Mr. Bush said he would allow the bill to become law without his signature , because he said only a constitutional amendment can protect the flag adequately .

[21581007]

In June , the Supreme Court threw out the conviction of a Texas man who set a flag afire during a 1984 demonstration , saying he was " engaging in political expression " that is protected by the First Amendment .