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The march against the Confederate flag continued Thursday — this time in Congress

By [Amber Phillips](#)

[The Fix](#)

May 19 at 12:42 PM



Flowers and a Confederate flag lay at the base of a marker at Gettysburg National Military Park in Pennsylvania on July 3, 2013. (Matt McClain/The Washington Post)

A year after America suddenly and overwhelmingly began unraveling itself from the Confederate flag, here's more evidence our relationship with it is ending.

On Thursday, the House of Representatives — including 84 Republicans — voted to make it illegal to drape or hoist the flag prominently in national veterans' cemeteries, including over mass graves. Those who want to mark their ancestors' spot with a Confederate flag could do so with a small one, but only on two days a year: Memorial Day and Confederates Memorial Day.

It's unclear whether this new limitation on the Confederate flag is actually going to become law, since it hasn't yet passed the Senate. But the House tends to be the more populist chamber of the two, and as such, a reflection of what the rest of America is thinking.

"Over 150 years ago, slavery was abolished," said Rep. Jared Huffman (D-Calif.) who proposed the amendment. "Why in the year 2016 are we still condoning displays of this hateful symbol on our sacred national cemeteries?" The Hill's Christina Marcos [reports](#) that no one spoke in opposition to it.

But many Republicans voted against it — 159, in fact — while about half as many (84) voted for it. And if Democrats have their way, the Confederate flag will be a campaign issue in the fall.

It's no coincidence this comes after a racially motivated shooting in Charleston, S.C., nearly a year ago that killed nine black church members and spurred a shift in how Americans — and especially Southern Republican politicians — view the flag's meaning. While acknowledging its symbolism of the South's heritage, for the first time many prominent Republicans also acknowledged its ties to racism.

"That flag, while an integral part of our past, does not represent the future of our great state," said South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley (R), who led the charge.

Gov. Haley: Time to move Confederate flag from Capitol grounds

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South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley (R) called for the removal of the Confederate flag from the grounds of the South Carolina state capitol following the fatal shooting of nine African Americans in a Charleston church. (South Carolina ETV)

Shortly after the shooting, South Carolina lawmakers heeded Haley's call and [voted to take down the Confederate flag](#) from state Capitol grounds in an emotional debate. The flag fell in Alabama as well as on the campus of the University of Mississippi. And a design change to Mississippi's flag, which is dominated by the rebel cross, was put to a vote there. (Voters [decided to keep it](#) as-is.)

This week, House Democrats also tried (but failed) to take down the Confederate flag flying at the Citadel — which is about two miles from the Charleston church, Marcos notes.

But Democrats trying to take down the Confederate flag got further Thursday than they ever had.

Thursday's vote was the first time the House had gone on the record for this. Last year, Huffman proposed a similar amendment, but it caught Republican lawmakers off-guard, and they let it pass in the dead of the night without a full vote. When Southern lawmakers saw what had happened the next morning, they objected, and GOP leaders decided to drop the entire spending bill it was attached to rather than put the contentious issue to a full vote. The vote would have happened on the same day South Carolina lawmakers were taking their historic vote on their own Confederate flag.

But it's not like the flag's supporters have disappeared. The legislative director for Rep. Lynn Westmoreland (R-Ga.) sent out this strongly worded warning before Thursday's vote: "You know who else supports destroying history so that they can advance their own agenda? [The Islamic State]. Don't be like ISIL."

Fellow Patriots and freedom loving history buffs,

I urge your bosses to vote **NO** on the Huffman Amendment. This amendment would strike an **Obama Administration directive** that allows Confederate flags to be flown on **only 2 days a year**: Memorial Day and Confederate Memorial Day.

Here is the language that the amendment is looking to strike:

8(d)(2) – At VA national cemeteries where Confederate veterans are buried in mass graves, the Confederate flag may be displayed on a separate flagpole that is subordinate to the United States of America flag on the day(s) identified in the paragraph 8.b.

You know who else supports destroying history so that they can advance their own agenda? ISIL. Don't be like ISIL. I urge you to vote NO.

Yours in freedom from the PC police,

Pete Sanborn
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Rep. Westmoreland's (R-GA) office using strong language urging House Rs to oppose Confederate flag amendment

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Westmoreland's office said afterward that they do not, in fact, condone that kind of strong language, but he still opposed taking the flag out of national cemeteries.



Amber Phillips writes about politics for The Fix. She was previously the one-woman D.C. bureau for the Las Vegas Sun and has reported from Boston and Taiwan.

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