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Senate

OUR CONSTITUTION

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, let me begin by saying plainly and unabashedly that I love our flag. I wear an American flag lapel pin to work every single day. We fly "Old Glory" at our home throughout the year and display it proudly in each of my Senate offices. The American flag is even displayed on the minivan that I drive all over our State. It is the symbol of our freedom and a reflection of our pride in our great Nation.

But while our flag is the symbol of our freedom, our Nation's Constitution is its guarantee. It is the foundation on which was built the longest living experiment in democracy in the history of the world. Though written by man, I believe it to be divinely inspired. Before beginning 23 years of service as a naval flight officer, I took the same oath as each of the men and women now fighting overseas. We swore to protect our Nation's safety and honor and defend our Constitution against all enemies both foreign and domestic. The men and women of our armed forces past and present each pledged to lay down their lives in defense of the freedoms our Constitution provides. I can think of no greater honor, no more solemn a commitment, than this pledge.

On a cold December 7, 214 years ago, Delawareans stood proudly and declared their belief in the right of self-government by becoming the first to ratify the United States Constitution. Each year we celebrate this act of leadership, courage, and wisdom. While our constitution has proved the most durable model for democracy, at the time, it

was a revolutionary and some thought risky step forward. For the power of its words and the brilliance of its logic is matched only by the astounding scope of what it sought to achieve, to "establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

It was truly a miraculous undertaking, and we celebrate that Delaware had the courage to lead the world in embracing this new standard excellence in self-government.

But as we reflect on this bold step towards freedom, there is a stain on our celebration.

After the Constitution's ratification, the Bill of Rights sought to provide greater and more lasting liberties than any single document before or since. In 1789, the Federal Government sent the articles that would make up the Bill of Rights to States for ratification. While other States sent their approval of ratification back to the Federal Government on separate parchment, in their enthusiasm, Delaware's leaders signed their approval directly on their copy of the document and returned it to the Federal Government. While other states are now able to display their copies of the original Bill of Rights, Delaware's is locked in a drawer in the National Archives near College Park, Maryland. Our State and this document deserve better. I call today on the National Archives to return this copy of the Bill of Rights to its place of ratification. I ask that in the spirit of celebration

surrounding Delaware Day, the National Archives return to us this important part of our State's history.

We are witnessing a time of renewed respect for our Nation at home and abroad. In fact, in all of my life, I've never witnessed a warmer embrace of our flag or a greater sense of pride for our country than we've seen since September 11. Almost everywhere we turn, we see signs of this renewed national pride on our homes, office buildings, factories, schools, construction sites, on the vehicles we drive, and as well at

thousands of sporting events, parades and gatherings across our country. A spirit of patriotism has swept across our Nation in a way that I've never seen. It is both comforting and inspiring to me and, I know, to Americans everywhere.

This December, let us pause in thanks to those wise Delawareans who started our Nation along the road to becoming the most successful and long-lasting democracy in world history. They gave us a great gift for which we, and much of the world, will be forever thankful.