

Arcata, CA Voters Put the Earth Flag at Top of City Flagpoles

On November 8, 2022, in recognition of the need to raise awareness and prioritize climate change action, voters in Arcata, California approved Measure “M”. This ballot initiative made it the official policy of the City of Arcata to fly the Earth flag at the top of all city-owned flagpoles, above the flags of the United States and California.

On December 16, after election certification and approval by the Arcata City Council, Earth flags were hoisted to the top of city flagpoles at the Arcata plaza, city hall and community center.

The initiative qualified for the ballot in May, when volunteers successfully gathered 1381 valid signatures on petitions.

Proponents of the measure state:

- Flags are symbols, and putting the Earth on top asserts that taking care of the Earth is our first priority.
- Flying the Earth flag on top is logical. The Earth includes our nation and our state.
- Climate change is real. The needs of our Earth come first. We can only have a healthy nation if we have a healthy Earth.
- There is a huge excess of nationalism in the world today. Policies dictated by nationalism and its greedy partner, corporatism, threaten all life on Earth. By focusing on the Earth as a whole, we can better address global warming and avoid the horrors of war.

Some have argued that the United States and California flag codes require the U.S. flag to be flown at the top. While flag codes do place the U.S. flag above, there is no legal history of their enforcement, and the federal flag code is broadly recognized as only advisory, even by the American Legion.

The proponents of Measure M are working cooperatively with the city to implement legal strategies that will inform us of the applicability of state flag laws, at minimal cost, while reducing the likelihood of hostile lawsuits. As it now stands, the Earth flag will continue to fly at the top of city-owned flagpoles as legal issues are explored. Proponents have engaged attorneys to defend the legality of the measure at no cost to the city.

Some may think that flying anything above the Stars and Stripes is unpatriotic or disrespectful. Measure “M” intends no such disrespect. One can still believe that America is the “greatest nation on Earth.” The emphasis of that phrase just moves to “on Earth.”

Humboldt County’s Chapter 56 of Veterans for Peace endorsed the measure, as did the Humboldt Progressive Democrats.

The “Blue Marble” Earth flag image was taken on December 7, 1972, by the *Apollo 17* spacecraft crew. It’s among the most reproduced images in history, just now celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Put the Earth on top!

Website: puttheearthontop.org

