

## **Freedom of Speech**

On Monday evening at the VFW in Dilworth, a friend and I were talking about the controversy over a football player not standing for playing of our National Anthem. After some discussion we agreed the event is an example of what is contained in the first Article or Amendment to our Constitution. As proposed in 1789 and ratified by three-fourths of the state legislatures on December 15, 1791, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Two questions can be asked; was he right and did he have the right. The answer to the first is what is being debated. The answer to the second is yes, he had the right to the freedom of speech. I am reminded of a speech from the movie *The American President*. I know it's a romantic comedy but it has a couple moments worth remembering. Here is what President Andrew Sheperd, played by Michael Douglas said "You want free speech? Let's see you acknowledge a man whose words make your blood boil, who's standing center stage and advocating at the top of his lungs that which you would spend a lifetime opposing at the top of yours" Yes, I stand for the National Anthem, I stand as the flag passes by in a parade, I respect both as symbols of our great nation. However, I also know that forced respect is the same as no respect. I believe he was wrong for not standing. I also strongly believe he had the right to not stand.

While on a political roll, the American Legion and VFW along with the League of Women Voters has invited the MN District 4 candidates for Senate and House to a forum on Minnesota Veterans issues and Minnesota charitable gaming issues. It will be held at 7:00 pm 15 September at the VFW, 1505 Main Ave W, Dilworth.

On Wednesday, 31 August, I was honored to make a presentation on the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Moorhead organization to the Moorhead Business Association breakfast meeting. The presentation included information on several of our past projects including helping servicemenbers and their families with food cards, gas cards, bus passes, auto repair, home repair and other unexpected expenses. We've helped with events ranging from family day at Camp Ripley to Christmas parties for our local guard members and their families. BTYR has no paid staff, completely run by volunteers for our community. BTYR holds two annual fund raisers, spring and fall. This fall's fund raiser, scheduled for 30 October will be for the MN Veterans Home in Fergus Falls and the VA Hospital in Fargo. If your service organization would like me to make the same presentation at an upcoming meeting, please contact me by e-mail.