



In God We Trust Motto Overview

Brief Overview/History

In God We Trust was adopted as the official motto of the United States in 1956. The phrase was designed as an alternative to *E pluribus unum*, which was the unofficial motto first used in 1782 when the Great Seal of the United States was also created. The phrase may have originated from the words of the "The Star-Spangled Banner" written during the War of 1812. The fourth stanza includes the phrase, "*And this be our motto: 'In God is our Trust.'*" The motto first appeared on U.S. coins in 1864 and on paper currency in 1957 (a one-dollar silver certificate). The law making *In God We Trust* the national motto was passed through a joint resolution by the 84th Congress ([P.L. 84-851](#)) and signed by President Dwight Eisenhower on July 30, 1956. Chief Historian at Antietam National Battlefield, Ted Alexander, maintains the motto was first used by the 125th Pennsylvania Infantry as a battle cry on September 17, 1862. From the crucible of the Civil War, the Reverend M. R. Watkinson, in a letter dated November 13, 1861, petitioned the Treasury Department to add a statement recognizing, "Almighty God in some form in our coins," perhaps as a declaration that God was on the Union side. Treasury Secretary, Salmon P. Chase, acted on Watkinson's proposal and directed the Director of the Philadelphia Mint, James Pollock, to begin work on potential designs that included the phrase. Due to an Act of Congress dated January 18, 1837, mottoes and devices that are placed on U.S. coins, had to first be prescribed by enacting additional legislation. Such legislation was introduced and passed on April 22, 1864, allowing the Secretary of the Treasury to authorize the inclusion of the phrase on one-cent and two-cent coins. The use of "In God We Trust" has been continuous since its inception. In 2006, on the 50th anniversary of its adoption, the Senate reaffirmed the phrase as the official national motto and in 2011, the [House of Representatives](#) passed an additional reaffirming resolution in a 396-9 vote. It is also the motto for the [State of Florida](#).