



In God We Trust Motto Overview

Supportive Talking Points

Evidence of Government Support for 'In God We Trust'

- The phrase is found in the fourth verse of our National Anthem. By the War of 1812, this national sentiment was so entrenched that Francis Scott Key, in penning the fourth verse of our national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner," wrote: "And this be our motto—'In God is our trust.'"
- The phrase first appeared on U.S. coins in 1864.
- The first paper money with the phrase 'In God We Trust' was printed in 1957.
- The National Motto, 'In God We Trust,' was created by Act of Congress in 1956. The bill was signed into law on July 30th 1956 by President Eisenhower.
- The National Motto was affirmed in 2002, and then in 2011 the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly (396 to 9) passed a resolution reaffirming the National Motto and encouraging the public display of this motto in all public buildings and public schools.
- Numerous state legislatures have passed similar laws and are encouraging schools and state offices to place a poster with the National Motto in every classroom.

Display of 'In God We Trust' in Government Buildings

- The National Motto is inscribed in gold letters above the speaker's rostrum in the U.S. House of Representatives. The National Motto is also inscribed on the walls of the United State Senate chambers.
- Nearly 100 Members of Congress have the National Motto prominently displayed in their offices.
- To date, over 600 cities and counties nationwide display the National Motto in their offices, chambers, official seals, and even on the outside of police and sheriff's cruisers.
- The National Motto is displayed in and on countless government buildings, businesses, schools, etc.

Legal Precedent for 'In God We Trust'

- The Motto has been found Constitutional in critical court cases:
 - In 1977, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the founder of American Atheists, brought suit claiming that the National Motto, "In God We Trust," and the usage of the National Motto on U.S. coins and currency violated the First Amendment to the Constitution. The federal district court dismissed Ms. O'Hair's complaint, and the appellate court affirmed. *O'Hair v. Blumenthal*, 462 F. Supp. 19 (W.D. Tex. 1978), *affd.* 588 F. 2d 1144 (5th Cir. 1979), *cert. denied*, 442 U.S. 930 (1979). In dismissing the complaint, the trial court quoted approvingly from a previous circuit court decision (*Aronow v. United States*, 432 F.2d 242, 243 (9th Cir. 1970)) that held that the "national motto and the slogan on coinage and currency 'In God We Trust' has nothing whatsoever to do with the establishment of religion. Its use is of a patriotic or ceremonial character and bears no true resemblance to a governmental sponsorship of a religious exercise." 462 F. Supp. at 19-20. The court in O'Hair also relied upon the U.S. Supreme Court case of *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963), which considered compulsory reading of the Bible in public schools (something that the Court prohibited). In this opinion involving public schools, Justice Brennan, in a concurring opinion, stated that the National Motto, "In God We Trust," was "interwoven . . . so deeply into the fabric of our civil polity that its present use may well not present that type of involvement which the First Amendment prohibits." *Id.* at 303.
 - The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, not known for its conservative leanings, in *Aronow v. United States*, held that the motto is "patriotic or ceremonial [in] character" and "has nothing whatsoever to do with the establishment of religion." And, 40 years later, in *Newdow v. Lefevre*, the Ninth Circuit re-affirmed that holding. The Tenth Circuit reached the same result in *Gaylor v. United States*, 74 F.3d 214 (10th Cir. 1992), *cert. den.*, 517 U.S. 1211 (1996).