



CONGRESSIONAL PRAYER CAUCUS FOUNDATION

August 11, 2021

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SENT VIA U.S. Mail & FAX (570) 326-1074

Stephen D. Keener
President and Chief Executive Officer
Little League Baseball and Softball
P.O. Box 3485
Williamsport, PA 17701-0485

RE: Religion in the Little League Pledge

Dear Mr. Keener:

I have the honor of serving as the President of the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation. The Foundation serves nearly 100 members of Congress who are part of the Congressional Prayer Caucus (the names of those members of Congress who serve on the Congressional Prayer Advisory Team are listed on the left).

In addition, the Foundation serves Legislative Prayer Caucuses in over 40 states, including Pennsylvania, which have over 1,000 state senators and state representatives as members. These leaders are working together to preserve the integrity of our first principles and protect First Amendment rights for all.

We recently learned that the co-presidents of the Freedom From Religion Foundation ("FFRF") wrote you a letter last month objecting to the use of the phrase "I trust in God" in the Little League Pledge. After providing an incomplete history of the development of the Pledge, FFRF argued that both the National Motto and the Little League Pledge "are widely recognized as blatant attempts at the time to ostracize nontheists," and are out of step with today's times. Although the Pledge is voluntary, FFRF claims that it gives Little League coaches "carte blanche" authority "to exploit the social nature of the sport to evangelize to a captive audience of children, sending a message of exclusion to nonbelievers."

Having responded to literally dozens of similar FFRF letters in the past 5 years or so, we noted a huge difference between those

and the one sent to you – the absence of cases usually cited by FFRF. The reason for this difference is simple – the Little League is a private organization and therefore cannot be browbeaten by FFRF’s citations to constitutional law that only applies to government. As a private organization, the Little League has every right to believe what it wants and can, therefore, simply ignore FFRF’s letter, which we urge you to do.

The official story of the Little League Pledge can be found [here](#). It states that when the first president of Little League Baseball learned that the local programs were reciting the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance before games (not unusual, since major league games still begin with the playing of the National Anthem), Mr. McGovern decided “to give all leagues (not just those in the United States) a pledge reflecting some of the sentiments of the Pledge of Allegiance, without the references to the U.S., while adding the elements of sportsmanship and the desire to excel.” That is, in a spirit of internationalism, Mr. McGovern created a Pledge that combined good sportsmanship with desire to succeed and included fundamental portions of the Pledge of Allegiance (“under God”) and the National Motto (“In God We Trust”) that, of course, are common to all nations. Despite FFRF’s protests and lawsuits against the National Motto to strip God from it, both the National Motto and the Pledge of Allegiance continue unamended for the past 7 decades. Perhaps this is because Americans by a significant majority (even according to FFRF’s math, 62% of young Americans believe in God!) and therefore have no issue with the Pledge, which remains an important part of our culture.

The elimination of the phrase “I trust in God” from the Pledge, or the elimination of the entire Pledge, would be a newsworthy event, and would demonstrate to the 62% of young Americans who believe in God, and 74% of their parents who share the same belief, that the Little League is now an atheist organization. As demonstrated well recently with another iconic American youth organization – the Boy Scouts – when they walked away from their fundamental principles, parents and children walk away from them. Don’t break with tradition, it would likely destroy a very good organization that has served American youth well for over 70 years.

To protect our freedom, we must exercise that freedom. We have First Amendment lawyers on staff who will work with you, free of charge, if you need their services. May God bless you and the millions of boys (including members of our staff) who have been part of Little League Baseball over the years.

Sincerely,



Congressman J. Randy Forbes
President
Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation
National Strategic Center