

H. Res. 548

In the House of Representatives, U.S.,

July 24, 2000.

Whereas the national motto of the United States is “In God we trust”;

Whereas the national motto was adopted in 1956 and is codified in the laws of the United States at section 302 of title 36, United States Code;

Whereas the national motto is a reference to the Nation’s “religious heritage” (Lynch v. Donnelly, 465 U.S. 668, 676 (1984));

Whereas the national motto recognizes the religious beliefs and practices of the American people as an aspect of our national history and culture;

Whereas nearly every criminal law on the books can be traced to some religious principle or inspiration;

Whereas the national motto is deeply interwoven into the fabric of our civil polity;

Whereas the national motto recognizes the historical fact that our Nation was believed to have been founded “under God”;

Whereas the content of the national motto is as old as the Republic itself and has always been as integral a part of

the first amendment as the very words of that charter of religious liberty;

Whereas the display and teaching of the national motto to public school children has a valid secular purpose, such secular purpose being to foster patriotism, symbolize the historical role of religion in our society, express confidence in the future, inculcate hope, and instruct in humility;

Whereas there is a long tradition of government acknowledgment of religion in mottoes, oaths, and anthems;

Whereas the national motto serves “the legitimate secular purposes of solemnizing public occasions, expressing confidence in the future, and encouraging the recognition of what is worthy of appreciation in society” (*Lynch v. Donnelly*, 465 U.S. at 693 (O’Connor, J., concurring));

Whereas the national motto reflects the sentiment that “[w]e are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being” (*Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306, 313 (1952));

Whereas President George Washington, in his Farewell Address, stated, “[o]f all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports,” and “[w]hatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle,” and “let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle”;

Whereas President John Adams wrote that it is religion and morality alone which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand;

Whereas the role of religion in public life is an important one which deserves the public's attention;

Whereas the signers of the Declaration of Independence appealed to the Supreme Judge of the World for the rectitude of their intentions, and avowed a firm reliance of the protection of Divine Providence;

Whereas President George Washington, in his First Inaugural Address, said that "it would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that His benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States a Government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes";

Whereas the First Congress urged President George Washington to proclaim "a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many single favours of Almighty God";

Whereas the First Congress reenacted the Northwest Ordinance, which stated that "[r]eligion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged";

Whereas the Declaration of Independence demonstrates this Nation was founded on transcendent values which flow from a belief in a Supreme Being;

Whereas the Founding Fathers believed devotedly that there was a God and that the unalienable rights of man were rooted in Him, is clearly evidenced in their writings, from the Mayflower Compact to the Constitution itself;

Whereas religion has been closely identified with the history and Government of the United States;

Whereas our national life reflects a religious people who earnestly pray that the Supreme Lawgiver guide them in every measure which may be worthy of His blessing; and

Whereas the national motto is prominently engraved in the wall above the Speaker's dais in the Chamber of the House of Representatives, appears over the entrance to the Chamber of the Senate, and is depicted on all United States coins and currency: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives encourages the display of the national motto of the United States in public buildings throughout the Nation.

Attest:

Clerk.