

“In God We Trust” Promoted in Schools?

Six states — Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, Florida, Alabama and Arizona — have recently approved legislation requiring or allowing public schools to display the words “In God We Trust” in prominent locations. South Carolina, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, and Kentucky may soon pass similar laws.

“In God We Trust” was adopted as the official motto of the United States in 1956. The fourth stanza of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” written during the War of 1812, includes, “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.

However, if the phrase is not understood and appreciated, educators, like those at one Tennessee school (see photo), might conform to the letter of the law by simply posting a copy of a dollar bill. Students will never notice it.

Teaching Your Children and Students a Civics Lesson

It is important that educators teach their students the meaning of the motto. From an educational standpoint, every time students see the national motto they should think of its special meaning for the country.

When used as a national motto, the phrase “In God We Trust” is not a *personal* declaration. Every person in America does not trust in the same God and some do not believe there is a god at all. How can a nation as diverse as ours make such a specific declaration?

The phrase reflects the civil foundation upon which America was founded in the same way that “one nation under God” does in the Pledge of Allegiance. The Declaration of Independence states, “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all Men are

created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.”

America is unique in that it sees rights coming from God, not from the government. Instead of the divine

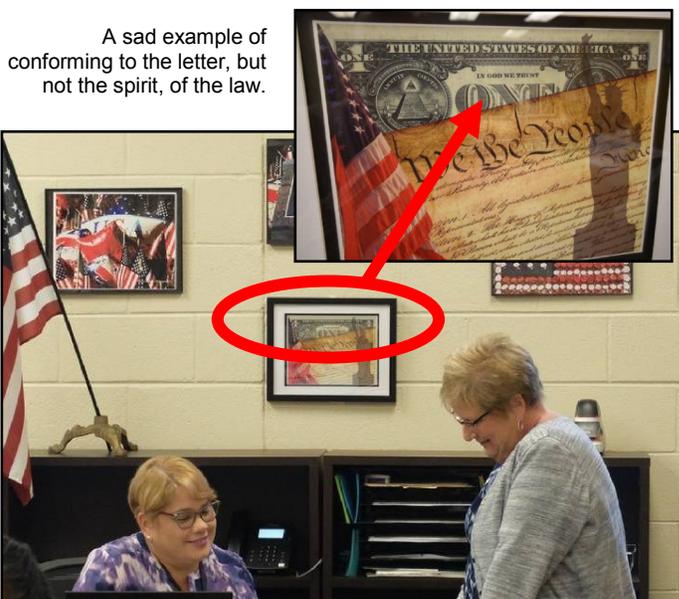


Photo by Tim Barber, Times Free Press, Chattanooga, TN

right of kings, our Founders asserted the divine rights of the common man. That was *truly* revolutionary.

Following the lead of the Declaration, nearly every state constitution begins with thankfulness to the “Sovereign Ruler of the Universe” or “Grateful to Almighty God.” When learning civics, students should



PRAYER REQUEST

1. Pray that parents will influence their schools to acknowledge the religious aspects of Thanksgiving and Christmas this year.
2. Pray that pastors will inform their congregations of students’ freedom of religious expression.

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Gateways to Better Education teamed up with Family Research Council to provide 40,000 pastors with a downloadable church bulletin insert laying out Seven Liberties everyone needs to know about religion in public schools.

"Nearly 90 percent of children in America attend public schools," Dr. Kenyon Cureton, Family Research Council's Vice President for Church Ministries, wrote in an email to pastors.



Dr. Kenyon Cureton



Family Research Council

"If we truly obey our Lord's commandment to 'love our neighbor as we love ourselves,'" he continued, "we will care about what happens to students, teachers, and administrators in that arena, especially when it comes to their God-given, First Amendment freedom to believe and live according to those beliefs." If you would like a copy of a bulletin insert listing seven liberties in public schools, contact info@gtbe.org.

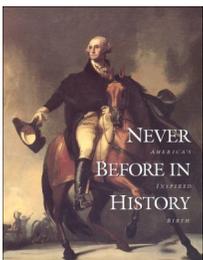
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understand that the laws of their state flowed from the principle that there is a God who gave Mankind certain unalienable rights and that the state legislators were crafting laws to protect (not grant) those rights.

Giving our national motto more visibility is important. However, without parents and educators *promoting* its importance, schools can conform to the letter of the law and not inspire students about its value for their lives.

Discussion Questions for Students

1. Since all Americans don't trust in God, why have a national motto stating, "In God We Trust"?
2. What does the preamble to our state's constitution say about God (search the internet) and how does that relate to our national motto?



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