

Atheists Attack 'In God We Trust' Over Hurt Feelings

Once again an atheist organization is attacking our **national motto**—this time suing to have it removed from our currency.

Let's be crystal clear: This is a lawsuit about hurt feelings, not violated rights. For two generations, atheist plaintiffs have been permitted to maintain (and sometimes win) lawsuits, not because public religious acknowledgments compel them to participate in religious activities or compel belief or compel speech, but instead because public religious acknowledgments are "offensive."

No other basis for the lawsuit makes sense. The coins—despite plaintiffs' claims—are not "discriminatory." After all, a quarter is a quarter, no matter the faith of the person spending it. Nor does money compel proselytization. No reasonable human being believes that paying for groceries means that I endorse the life and beliefs of the president on the currency or the words on the coins.

Plaintiffs are suing simply because they don't like this democratic nation's chosen motto, and it's high time that our nation's courts shut their doors for lawsuits based on hurt feelings. In a democracy there is no such thing as universal consensus.

Every act has its supporters and its opponents, and all legislation leaves someone feeling hurt and excluded. The Constitution exists to prevent the actions of the majority from coercively depriving citizens of protected rights. **Censorship** is coercion. An unreasonable search is coercion. The taking of property without proper payment is coercion.

Feeling upset is not coercion.

Moreover, there's a remedy for their hurt feelings, and it's the same remedy that the rest of us have when laws exist that we don't like: We can exercise our **First Amendment**-protected right of **free speech** to seek to change the law. I invite the Freedom From Religion Foundation to try; it would lead to a welcome debate on the historical role of faith in our founding and our culture.

At the ACLJ, we'll be filing a legal brief on behalf of Members of Congress and on behalf of everyone who joins our Committee to Protect the National Motto. We'll be demonstrating the solid constitutional reasons for upholding the presence of the motto, and—critically—we'll be giving you a direct voice in an important constitutional case.

Oh, and we'll be responding with facts and law, not with feelings. Our feelings matter, but not in federal court.

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