

# In God We Trust: Nation's Motto Will Stay on US Currency

"In God We Trust," our nation's official motto, was first adopted in 1956 as an alternative to the unofficial "*E Pluribus Unum*" ("Of Many, One") placed on the Great Seal of the United States upon its adoption in 1782.

The new motto began appearing on our nation's paper currency in 1957, but it had been used on coins dating as far back as 1864. But a lawsuit filed by a group of atheist humanists sought to have it removed from all currency, insisting that it violated the "Establishment Clause" of the First Amendment.

The American Legion, with the legal assistance of the First Liberty Institute, filed an amicus brief with the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio in May. That brief stated the plaintiffs in the case were making three errors in their argument:

- Confusing free exercise doctrine with Establishment Clause doctrine.
- Confusing the purpose of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.
- Confusing government speech with compelled speech.

In the brief, attorneys wrote:

The American Legion believes that our National Motto, "In God We Trust," itself originating in Francis Scott Key's poem that would become "The Star-Spangled Banner" and honoring the courage and valor of our service members who defended Fort McHenry during the War of 1812, is a fitting and solemnizing motto for this nation. The American Legion has, therefore—as recognized even in Plaintiffs' First

Amended Complaint—regularly advocated for the recognition and honor of our National Motto as well as its history and heritage.

Ultimately, U.S. District Judge Benita Y. Pearson granted a motion to dismiss the case. She ultimately agreed with the arguments made in the First Liberty and American Legion brief. First Liberty President and CEO Kelly Shackelford said he was grateful the court upheld the federal government's ability to display the national motto on currency.

"Federal courts have repeatedly upheld the national motto as constitutional," he said. "'In God We Trust' is deeply embedded in our nation's history and is a symbol of patriotism." {eoa}