

Why a Veterans Group Is Defending 'In God We Trust'

A group of atheists and humanists are spearheading an effort to remove the nation's motto, "In God We Trust," from our money—again.

But this time, the typically apolitical American Legion is stepping in. Tuesday, the largest veterans organization in the U.S.—with more than 2 million members—filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support of the U.S. Department of Justice's motion, asking the court to dismiss the lawsuit.

The brief, filed by First Liberty Institute on the American Legion's behalf, notes that federal courts at every level have repeatedly upheld the national motto as constitutional. It further explains the phrase is "deeply rooted in American history" and not only appears on U.S. currency, but also on prominent government property:

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.

First Liberty founder and CEO Kelly Shackelford said the federal government's decision to display the motto on our currency "promotes patriotism" and "recognition of our national heritage." It is therefore completely appropriate and lawful, he said, and banning the national motto would be both

unlawful and wrong.

“The Supreme Court has described the National Motto, ‘In God We Trust,’ as consistent with the U.S. Constitution,” First Liberty Senior Counsel Justin Butterfield said. “It appears on government buildings across the country, including the House and Senate Chambers and the Washington Monument. As every federal appeals court to have heard the issue has upheld ‘In God We Trust’ as lawful, we have asked the Court to dismiss the lawsuit.”