

Mass. Judge OKs 'Under God' in Pledge of Allegiance

The words "under God" will remain part of the Pledge of Allegiance in Massachusetts classrooms after a judge ruled that the phrase does not violate the rights of an atheist family there.

An atheist couple filed suit against the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District. Their complaint: the words "under God" violated their rights. Middlesex Superior Court Judge Jane Haggerty did not agree.

"The Pledge is a voluntary patriotic exercise, and the inclusion of the phrase 'under God' does not convert the exercise into a **prayer**," Haggerty wrote in her 24-page opinion.

Haggerty also noted that it is not a violation of state law or the school's anti-discrimination policy for the students in the school district to recite the pledge.

"We are pleased with the court's decision regarding the claim of discrimination," School Superintendent Stephen Mills said in a letter to his staff. "And we continue to work hard to provide a positive and accepting educational environment for all of the students in the communities that we serve."

In 1954, the words "under God" were added to the Pledge. The full Pledge reads: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

"The Pledge of Allegiance's proclamation that America is united as one nation under God is consistent with the Declaration of Independence," says Mathew Staver, founder and

chairman of Liberty Counsel. "The Judeo-Christian values that formed the foundation of America are the reason for American exceptionalism. When we say the Pledge, we are not Republicans or Democrats. We are Americans."