

Texas Law Requiring Public Schools to Display National Motto Draws Major Backlash

Posters featuring the national motto are going up in public schools and colleges across Texas, and that's drawing backlash from several groups who argue the phrase is used to promote Christian nationalism.

A new Texas state law requires all public elementary, secondary schools and institutions of higher education to post in their facilities "In God We Trust" posters if they are donated or purchased by private donations.

The Texas Tribune reports Senate Bill 797 passed during last year's legislative session. The law went into effect last year.

The law says schools "must display in a conspicuous place in each building of the school or institution a durable poster or framed copy of the United States national motto 'In God We Trust.'" The poster must contain a representation of the United States flag centered under the national motto and a representation of the Texas state flag.

Republican State Sen. Bryan Hughes wrote in a tweet the national motto asserts our collective trust in a sovereign God.

However, the posters have drawn severe backlash from groups who are arguing on social media that the posters promote the Christian faith even though "In God We Trust" has been the national motto since 1956.

National Motto's History in Congress and in Court

On July 30, 1956, the 84th Congress passed a joint resolution

“declaring ‘IN GOD WE TRUST’ the national motto of the United States.” The resolution passed both the House and the Senate unanimously and without debate. It replaced E pluribus Unum, which had existed before as a de facto official motto. The United States Code at 36 . § 302, now states: “‘In God we trust’ is the national motto.”

That resolution was reaffirmed in 2006, on the 50th anniversary of its adoption, by the Senate, and in 2011 by the House of Representatives, in a 396 to 9 vote. In 2000, the House additionally encouraged public displays of the motto.

The motto is featured above the rostrum of the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. It was carved into the wall in December of 1962.

In 1970, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled in *Aronow v. United States*: “It is quite obvious that the national motto and the slogan on coinage and currency ‘In God We Trust’ has nothing whatsoever to do with the establishment of religion. Its use is of a patriotic or ceremonial character and bears no true resemblance to a governmental sponsorship of a religious exercise.”

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