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83D CONGRESS
2d Session

} HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES {

REPORT
No. 1693

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ORSE,
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AMENDING THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 28, 1954.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed

Mr. JONAS of Illinois, from the Committee on the Judiciary, sub-
mitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. J. Res. 243]

The Committee on the Judiciary, to whom was referred the joint resolution (H. J. Res. 243) to amend the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with an amendment and recommend that the joint resolution, as amended, do pass.

The amendment is as follows:

Page 2, line 1, strike out the comma after the words "one Nation".

PURPOSE

The act of June 22, 1942 (ch. 435, 56 Stat. 1074), as amended, relates to rules and customs pertaining to the display and use of the flag of the United States of America. Section 7 of that act contains the pledge of allegiance to the flag; and it is the purpose of this proposed legislation to amend that pledge by adding the words "under God" so as to make it read, in appropriate part, "one Nation under God, indivisible,".

STATEMENT

Since the introduction of this legislation the committee and a great number of the individual Members of Congress have received communications from all over the United States urging the enactment of this measure.

At this moment of our history the principles underlying our American Government and the American way of life are under attack by a system whose philosophy is at direct odds with our own. Our American Government is founded on the concept of the individuality and the dignity of the human being. Underlying this concept is the

belief that the human person is important because he was created by God and endowed by Him with certain inalienable rights which no civil authority may usurp. The inclusion of God in our pledge therefore would further acknowledge the dependence of our people and our Government upon the moral directions of the Creator. At the same time it would serve to deny the atheistic and materialistic concepts of communism with its attendant subservience of the individual.

The Supreme Court ruled in 1892 that "this is a religious nation."¹ It reiterated this holding, more recently (1951), when it stated:

We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a supreme being.²

Those words by our Supreme Court are true in a very fundamental and realistic sense. From the time of our earliest history our peoples and our institutions have reflected the traditional concept that our Nation was founded on a fundamental belief in God. For example, our colonial forebears recognized the inherent truth that any government must look to God to survive and prosper. In the year 1620, the Mayflower compact, a document which contained the first constitution in America for complete self-government, declared in the opening sentence "In the name of God. Amen." This was an open recognition, by our forebears, of the need for the official conjunction of the laws of God with the laws of the land.

It was William Penn who said: "Those people who are not governed by God will be ruled by tyrants."

Four years before the Declaration of Independence, we find George Mason arguing to the General Court of Virginia that—

All acts of legislature apparently contrary to the natural right and justice are, in our laws, and must be in the nature of things considered as void. The laws of nature are the laws of God, whose authority can be superseded by no power on earth.

On July 4, 1776, our Founding Fathers proclaimed our Declaration of Independence which no less than four times refers to the existence of the Creator. It states in part:

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

This same document appeals to "the Supreme Judge of the world" that this Nation be free, and pledges our Nation to support the Declaration "with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence."

During the Presidency of Abraham Lincoln, the Congress passed the act of April 22, 1864, directing that the inscription "In God we trust" be placed on our coins. This avowal of faith has been imprinted on billions and billions of coins during the last 90 years.

Later at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863, Lincoln said:

That we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this Nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.

¹ *Church of the Holy Trinity v. U. S.* (1892) (143 U. S. 457, 470).

² *Zorach v. Clauson* (1951) (343 U. S. 306, 313).

AMEND THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

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Recently President Eisenhower joined with Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, Rabbi Norman Salit, and the American Legion Commander, Arthur J. Connell, in the American Legion's Back to God appeal in connection with its Four Chaplains' Day, commemorating the four military chaplains who heroically gave their lives when the troopship *Dorchester* was sunk in 1943. The President declared that "all the history of America" bears witness to the truth that "in time of test or trial we instinctively turn to God." "Today, as then (Gettysburg), there is need for positive acts of renewed recognition that faith is our surest * * * strength, our greatest resource."

Representative Louis C. Rabaut who testified at the hearing before the subcommittee aptly stated the need for this legislation in the following words:

By the addition of the phrase "under God" to the pledge, the consciousness of the American people will be more alerted to the true meaning of our country and its form of government. In this full awareness we will, I believe, be strengthened for the conflict now facing us and more determined to preserve our precious heritage.

More importantly, the children of our land, in the daily recitation of the pledge in school, will be daily impressed with a true understanding of our way of life and its origins. As they grow and advance in this understanding, they will assume the responsibilities of self-government equipped to carry on the traditions that have been given to us. Fortify our youth in their allegiance to the flag by their dedication to "one Nation, under God."

Since our flag is symbolic of our Nation, its constitutional government and the morality of our people, the committee believes it most appropriate that the concept of God be included in the recitations of the pledge of allegiance to the flag. It should be pointed out that the adoption of this legislation in no way runs contrary to the provisions of the first amendment to the Constitution. This is not an act establishing a religion or one interfering with the "free exercise" of religion. A distinction must be made between the existence of a religion as an institution and a belief in the sovereignty of God. The phrase "under God" recognizes only the guidance of God in our national affairs. The Supreme Court has clearly indicated that the references to the Almighty which run through our laws, our public rituals, and our ceremonies in no way flout the provisions of the first amendment (*Zorach v. Clauson* (343 U. S. 306, 312-313)). In so construing the first amendment, the Court pointed out that, if this recognition of the Almighty was not so, then even a fastidious atheist or agnostic could object to the way in which the Court itself opens each of its sessions, namely, "God save the United States and this Honorable Court" (id., 313).

Included as a part of this report is an opinion from the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress, concerning the proper placement of the words "under God" in the pledge of allegiance.

MAY 11, 1954.

To: Mr. Cyril F. Brickfield [Assistant Counsel], House Committee on the Judiciary.

Subject: Placing of the words "under God" in the pledge of allegiance.

The pledge of allegiance to the flag was recognized and codified by Congress in the Flag Code of 1942 (act of June 22, 1942, amended December 22, 1942, U. S. C. 36:172). The pledge law now reads: "I pledge allegiance to the flag

AMEND THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Currently, several proposals are pending, to insert in this pledge the words "under God." These present several alternatives as to placement and punctuation:

- (1) * * * Republic for which it stands, one Nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty * * *
- (2) * * * Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty * * *
- (3) * * * Republic for which it stands, one Nation indivisible under God, with liberty * * *

You have asked for a brief memorandum on the question of placement and punctuation, and whether the rules of grammar point to one form rather than another. The present statement is limited to this narrow point. Of course, before any judgment can be expressed, the fundamental question must be met—what is the exact meaning intended by the proposed insertion? On this point, we have some remarks in the Congressional Record as a guide.

Representative Rabaut, who introduced Joint Resolution 243, explained his measure in the Congressional Record of February 12, 1954, page A-1115. "Unless we are willing to affirm our belief in the existence of God and His creator-creature relationship to man, we drop man himself to the significance of a grain of sand. * * * Children and Americans of all ages must know that this is one Nation which 'under God' means 'liberty and justice for all.'"

Senator Ferguson, who introduced Senate Joint Resolution 126, commented that "Our Nation was founded on a fundamental belief in God * * * communism, on the contrary, rejects the very existence of God." (See Congressional Record, April 1, 1954, p. A-2527.)

It seems unlikely, then, that the insertion is intended as a general affirmation of the proposition that the United States of America is "founded on a fundamental belief in God." The new language should therefore be inserted, and punctuated, so as most clearly to indicate this general thought. Under the generally accepted rules of grammar, a modifier should normally be placed as close as possible to the word it modifies. In the present instance, this would indicate that the phrase "under God," being intended as a fundamental and basic characterization of our Nation, might well be put immediately following the word "Nation." Further, since the basic idea is a Nation founded on a belief in God, there would seem to be no reason for a comma after Nation; "one Nation under God" thus becomes a single phrase, emphasizing precisely the idea desired by the authors noted above.

This reading, it will be noticed, substitutes the basic concept of "one Nation under God" for the phrase now in the law, "one Nation indivisible"; and "indivisible" becomes a separate prime modifier.

In the alternative reading, "one Nation indivisible under God," the phrase "under God" would by the normal rules of grammar be read as modifying "indivisible," rather than "Nation." By the same reasoning, in the reading "one Nation under God indivisible," indivisible would naturally be construed as modifying the word "God."

It may be noted in passing that as the expression is used in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address [that this Nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom * * *] the phrase "under God" seems to mean "with the help of God." Lincoln was solemnly asking his people to resolve that the Nation, with God's help, should have a new birth of freedom. The difference in context seems adequate reason for the punctuation as given.

W. C. GILBERT, Assistant Director.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with clause 3 of rule XIII of the House of Representatives there is printed below in roman type without brackets existing law in which no change is proposed by enactment of this bill: New provisions proposed to be inserted are shown in *italic*.

AMEND THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

5

TITLE 28, UNITED STATES CODE

§ 172. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG; MANNER OF DELIVERY

The following is designated as the pledge of allegiance to the flag: "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." Such pledge should be rendered by standing with the right hand over the heart. However, civilians will always show full respect to the flag when the pledge is given by merely standing at attention, men removing the headdress. Persons in uniform shall render the military salute.

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