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Ms. Oberg

English 11

Under God in the Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was originally written in 1892 and has since been recited every day by many Americans as well as been edited as time goes on. Some of the changes in the pledge include changing “I pledge allegiance to my flag…” to say “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the united states of America” (The Pledge of Allegiance a Short History pg. 1). One of the most controversial changes in the pledge is adding the phrase “Under God.” Many people believe that this statement is an act of government sponsored religious activity (One Nation Under God? Para. 15 but this is not the case. People argue that “Under God” should be taken out of the pledge of allegiance; I disagree. There are many reasons that “Under God” should be left in the pledge of allegiance. The pledge of allegiance is a tradition, it is meant to solemnize events (not act as a religious confession), and, beyond that, removing the under god from the pledge would not be nearly as simple as it sounds, as well as the fact that it is not harming anyone one at all. People have a choice to say it or not.

One reason that many people keep close to their heart as to why the pledge of allegiance shouldn’t be changed is that it is traditional. Of course it can be changed, and it has been, but that does not diminish its meaning. The phrase “Under God” was added to the pledge in 1954 because of the affects of the cold war. For many, the phrase distinguished the United States from the evil, unreligious peoples of the Soviet Union (Stand Up for Liberty). This piece would not be in the pledge if it weren’t for the fact that many people at the time believed it was a good idea; why should that be changed now? Atheism is often connected to the belief of being heartless or uncompassionate and the US did not want to fit into this stereotype. We wanted to stand out as being compassionate and peaceful. However this was some time ago and now many people believe that it is a form of religious recitation. The phrase under god is not to show our religious beliefs; it has evolved much more as simply bring seriousness and solemnity to events. In a court case in 1992 (*Sherman v. Community Consolidated School District 21),* the court decided that the pledge reflects ceremonial deism and not a religious exercise. The decided that phrases like this, including the phrase “In God We Trust” seen many other places in government, “have lost their original religious significance,” and that “…sates may make use of them for the secular purpose of ‘solemnizing public occasions’” (One Nation Under God? Para. 13). The inclusion of the word God in these cases are not meant to be expressed as religious practice, but instead as a way to make situations seem more serious.

The phrase “Under God” has lost its religious meaning rendering the want to remove it unnecessary and a hassle. Removing just the phrase under god from the pledge would not be as simple as it sounds. Not only would many people need to agree to remove it and it would have to be changed and enforced, but it would also bring up other questions about what is right and what is not. If a broader decision were made stating a broad constitutional prohibition on the endorsement of religion by the government, this could cause many more problems. Not only would the pledge of allegiance be threatened but so many other things such as the national motto “In God We Trust” which is found public seals and our currency (One Nation Under God? Pg. 7). If this idea were threatened as well it would be a very long and costly process.

There is no real reason that the pledge of allegiance should be altered in any way. Many people feel a stronger connection to the pledge the way it is because it is traditional and meaningful. Despite a not uncommon belief, no one is required to say the pledge of allegiance. Each and every person has their right to say, not say, or recite any version of the Pledge of Allegiance ('Under God' in Pledge of Allegiance). No one is required to say the pledge at all if they do not want to do so. It was decided in the court case, *West Virginia v. Barnette* (1943) that forcing a person to recite the pledge went against what the flag stood for (One Nation Under God? Pg. 2). Thanks to the *Barnette* case, no person is required to recite the pledge and this right must be honored. Many people believe that the pledge of allegiance, the way it is now, including the phrase “Under God” is a symbol of the importance of religion in the country’s history and is very important to many people. Those who dislike it are free to remain silent or simply not recite that particular phrase.

There is much controversy over whether the pledge of allegiance is right and what we should do about it. I believe that nothing should change. It is a piece of American history and holds a place in the hearts of many people. Although it may have started as a way to differentiate ourselves from the Soviet Union through expression of religion, it has since changed. The use of god is used simply to bring a serious mood to public events. Removing the phrase from the pledge could cause or lead to a change that removes all references of God in government. This would not only be difficult but it would also take up many recourses including time and money. If nothing else, people who do not want this piece in the pledge can simply not say that part. Many people want to keep this as a symbol of tradition. Everyone has the right to say or not any part of the pledge that they wish. This would save time and energy and we would be able to keep the pledge of allegiance the way that it is.

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