



Board Agenda Item 6

DATE: August 19, 2025

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: Garry Bredefeld, Supervisor, District 2

SUBJECT: Display the National Motto "In God We Trust" in the Board of Supervisors Chambers

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Adopt Resolution approving the display of the National Motto "In God We Trust" in the Fresno County Board of Supervisors Chambers above the seal of Fresno County.

It is recommended the Board of Supervisors approve the proposed Resolution which would memorialize the Board's support to display our National Motto, "In God We Trust" in the Fresno County Board of Supervisors Chambers above the seal of Fresno County.

The official National Motto reflects a broad, historical recognition of the country's heritage and civic values. The inclusion and display of the National Motto in the Fresno County Board Chambers serves as a unifying statement, expressing trust in higher ideals and reinforcing the County's commitment to foundational principles such as justice, liberty, and service to the people. If adopted, it will align with the long-standing national tradition and mirrors similar actions taken by local cities, including the City of Fresno - the largest city in Fresno County. Specifically, Fresno County currently has 10 cities that have officially voted to display "In God We Trust" in their chambers.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

The Board can choose to not approve the recommended resolution and not authorize the display of the National Motto, "In God We Trust" in the Fresno County Board of Supervisors Chambers above the seal of Fresno County.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no increase in Net County Cost associated with the recommended action. Sufficient appropriations are included in District 2 budget, Board of Supervisors Org, 0110 FY 2025-26 Recommended Budget.

DISCUSSION:

"In God We Trust" is the official motto of the United States. It was adopted as the nation's motto in 1956 as an alternative or replacement to the unofficial motto of E Pluribus Unum, which was adopted when the Great Seal of the United States was created and adopted in 1782.

"In God We Trust" first appeared on US coins in 1864 and has appeared on paper currency since 1957. A law passed in a joint Resolution by the 84th Congress and approved by President Dwight D. Eisenhower on July 30, 1956, declared IN GOD WE TRUST must appear on American currency. The first paper currency bearing this phrase entered circulation on October 1, 1957, when it appeared on the one-dollar silver

certificate.

All federal courts open their proceedings requesting that “God save the United States and this honorable Court.” Our National Motto, “In God We Trust,” is prominently engraved on the wall above the Speaker’s dais in the Chamber of the House of Representatives and is reproduced on every coin minted and every dollar printed by the Federal Government.

A review of relevant case law outlined by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously supports the displaying of the national motto as long as it is not done solely for religious purposes (Attachment B). Here, the motive is clear - to honor the national motto by displaying it in the Board Chambers. Therefore, Fresno County’s decision to display “In God We Trust” in its Board Chambers is both constitutionally sound and affirms the values that transcend partisanship, division, and ideology. Attachments B, C, and D, provide additional background information on the National Motto. Attachment E shows the display of the National Motto in various city chambers.

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:

Resolution “In God We Trust”

Attachment A - Memo from Pacific Justice Institute

Attachment B - The History of the National Motto “In God We Trust”

Attachment C - List of Cities & Counties in the USA who have adopted “In God We Trust”

Attachment D - List of Cities & Counties in California who have adopted “In God We Trust”

Attachment E - Pictures of Chambers with “In God We Trust”

Attachment F - Layout Design of “In God We Trust”

CAO ANALYST:

George Uc