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PACIFIC JUSTICE INSTITUTE

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Jacque Sullivan
Founder/President
In God We Trust -- America, Inc.
Bakersfield, California

Re: "In God We Trust" Displays

Dear Ms. Sullivan,

It has come to our attention that your organization is promoting displays throughout the nation commemorating the national motto, "In God We Trust." We are writing to offer our perspective on this important issue, and also to offer our representation at no charge should any government entities which approve the displays encounter any legal opposition.

By way of introduction, Pacific Justice Institute is a nonprofit organization which specializes in defending religious liberty, including our nation's religious heritage. PJI is currently an intervener/defendant which, alongside the U.S. Department of Justice, is providing the legal defense in *Newdow v. Lefevre*, a lawsuit challenging the inclusion of the national motto on our nation's currency.

As you may have heard, the federal Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously agreed with our position that the motto is constitutional. In its decision filed March 11, 2010, the Ninth Circuit explained that displaying such a venerable reminder of our national heritage and identity as the national motto is unquestionably constitutional.

The Ninth Circuit's ruling follows every other court and judge in the nation that has considered the national motto, including the following:

- *Lambeth v. Bd. of Comm'rs of Davidson County*, 407 F.3d 266 (4th Cir. 2005), held a county board's decision to authorize inscription of "In God We Trust" on facade of county government center did not constitute a violation of the Establishment Clause.
- *Schmidt v. Cline*, 127 F.Supp.2d 1169 (D. Kan. 2000), held constitutional the placement in a county building of posters bearing the motto. The court relied on a previous Tenth Circuit decision finding that the motto has a secular purpose akin to Justice O'Connor's well-known references to "ceremonial deism".
- *Myers v. Loudoun County School Bd.*, 251 F. Supp. 2d 1262 (E.D. Va. 2003), upheld as constitutional a school's implementation of a state statute requiring schools to post the national motto in every public school building.

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June 4, 2010

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- Numerous Supreme Court decisions and opinions of individual justices have pointed to the national motto as an example of constitutionality, *see, e.g. Wooley v. Maynard*, 430 U.S. 705, 717, n.15 (1977); *Lynch v. Donnelly*, 465 U.S. 668, 693 (1984); *County of Allegheny v. ACLU*, 492 U.S. 573, 602-3 (1989); *Stone v. Graham*, 449 U.S. 39, 45 (1980) (Rehnquist, J., concurring); *School Dist. of Abington Twp. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203, 303 (1963) (Brennan, J. concurring); *Marsh v. Chambers*, 463 U.S. 783, 818 (1983) (Brennan, J. dissenting); *Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290, 322-323 (2000) (Rehnquist, C.J. dissenting); *Van Orden v. Perry*, 125 S.Ct. 2854, 2879 (2005) (Stevens, J. dissenting); *McCreary County v. ACLU*, 125 S.Ct. 2722, 2750 (2005) (Scalia, J. dissenting).

As the foregoing cases attest, numerous legal authorities at all levels of the federal judiciary and throughout the country support displaying the national motto in a public setting.

In conclusion, the Pacific Justice Institute would like to commend your organization for promoting the national motto, and to assure you that under applicable case law, such recognitions are clearly constitutional. Should any government entity receive legal threats from those who oppose even innocuous acknowledgements of religion in public life, the Pacific Justice Institute would be honored to defend them at no charge in state or federal court. To take advantage of this offer, or if you have any other questions about this important issue, please do not hesitate to contact Pacific Justice Institute at either (916) 857-6900 (Northern California office), (510) 834-7232 (Bay Area Office), (714) 796-7150 (Southern California office), or via our website at www.pji.org.

Sincerely,



Matthew B. McReynolds
Staff Attorney
PACIFIC JUSTICE INSTITUTE