



## Legislation Details (With Text)

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**Title:** \*\*\*RESOLUTION - Implementing the public display of our national motto, "In God We Trust" inside the Fresno City Council Chambers, on the wall behind the dais.

**Sponsors:** Garry Bredefeld

**Indexes:**

**Code sections:**

**Attachments:** 1. IGWT Resolution.pdf, 2. IGWT Pacific Justice Institute Memo.pdf, 3. IGWT National Motto - History.pdf, 4. IGWT Cities and Counties Across USA.pdf, 5. IGWT Cities in Fresno County.pdf, 6. IGWT City Attorney Legal Memo.pdf, 7. IGWT Before and After of Council Chambers.pdf, 8. IGWT Photos Across USA.pdf, 9. IGWT Picture Powerpoint.pdf, 10. Letter from Interfaith Alliance of Central California.pdf, 11. Supplement Correspondence from Central Valley Alliance of Atheists and Skeptics.pdf, 12. Supplement Correspondence from Pacific Justice Institute (PJI).pdf

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
5/11/2017	1	City Council	approved	Pass

## REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

**MAY 11, 2017**

**FROM:** Garry Bredefeld, Councilmember  
Council District 6

### SUBJECT

\*\*\*RESOLUTION - Implementing the public display of our national motto, "In God We Trust" inside the Fresno City Council Chambers, on the wall behind the dais.

### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended Council approve the Resolution that would state the Council's support to the proposed Resolution to display our national motto, "In God We Trust" inside the Council Chambers on the wall behind the dais.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2010, a Federal Appeals Court in the District of Columbia ruled 3-0 that the national motto was constitutional under the First Amendment. The Court quoted the 1970 decision in *Aronow v. United States* maintaining, "It is quite obvious that the national motto and slogan on coinage and

currency ‘In God We Trust’ has nothing to do with the establishment of religion... rather, its use is of patriotic or ceremonial character and bears no true resemblance to a governmental sponsorship of a religious exercise.” The Supreme Court case of *Town of Greece, NY v. Galloway* supports this conclusion as well (see Attachment for the legal memo by the Fresno City Attorney). It has been noted and well established that the courts have consistently and repeatedly upheld the motto as constitutional and not in violation of the First Amendment (see Attachment for the legal memo by the Pacific Justice Institute).

Additionally, in November, 2011, the House of Representatives passed House Resolution 13 in a landslide vote (396-9) to reaffirm “In God We Trust” as the official motto of the United States, and encouraged its overt display. The widespread support throughout our country of our national motto, and the clear and unequivocal recognition of its legality has resulted in hundreds of cities, counties, courthouses and statehouses displaying “In God We Trust” in their chambers and/or public buildings (see Attachment for photos of “In God We Trust” across America). Council is asked to also honor the national motto by displaying it in the Fresno City Council Chambers.

## BACKGROUND

In September of 1814, during the British bombardment of Fort McHenry, Francis Scott Key composed the poem *The Star Spangled Banner*, of which the last line of the second and final stanza is, “and this be our Motto, in God be our Trust” (see Attachment for a history of the motto).

Further, in 1866, Congress enacted legislation authorizing the inscription of the phrase “In God We Trust” to be placed on certain coins. In 1954, during the Dwight D. Eisenhower Administration, Congress approved the words “Under God” to be added to our Pledge of Allegiance. In our pledge, the United States is described as “One Nation under God.”

In 1955, Congress mandated the inscription of “In God We Trust” on all coins and paper currency. In 1956, Congress voted in favor of declaring “In God We Trust” as the national motto of the United States.

It is worth noting that 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.

Additionally, the Preamble of the Constitution of California provides, “We, the People of the State of California, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, in order to secure and perpetuate its blessings, do establish this Constitution.”

If Fresno chooses to display our national motto, “In God We Trust” inside the Council Chambers it will join 7 other cities in Fresno County, 131 other cities and counties in California, and 648 other cities and counties across America who have already adopted a resolution to display our national motto, “In God We Trust” in a prominent location in their Council Chambers (see Attachment for a list of cities & counties across Fresno County and America). If Fresno Council should approve the resolution it will be the latest and largest city in the State of California to have adopted such a resolution.

## ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

N/A

## LOCAL PREFERENCE

N/A

## FISCAL IMPACT

The sole source of the funding for the implementation of this display shall come from the private sector. If adopted, the national motto will be placed in the Council Chambers under the direction of City staff (see attachment of before & after photos of Council Chambers).

### Attachments:

- A. Resolution
- B. Pacific Justice Institute Letter
- C. History of the Motto
- D. Yes Vote List - Counties and Cities across America dated March 20, 2017
- E. Cities in Fresno County - displaying IN GOD WE TRUST
- F. Legal Memo from Fresno City Attorney
- G. Before and After Photos of "In God We Trust" inside Council Chambers
- H. Photos of "In God We Trust" from cities and counties nation-wide