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May 15, 2014

Two Victories for Religious Freedom



With [troubling news](#) happening across the globe, it is encouraging to recognize two pivotal U.S. court decisions that became great victories for Religious Freedom.

Before we go any further, we want to remind you what Freedom of Religion is. Freedom of Religion is much more than its government-restrictive-impostor, “freedom of worship.” [Freedom of worship](#) requires religious beliefs or behaviors to only be practiced privately in your home or behind the walls of a church. One example of this was in the Soviet Union, where [Lenin permitted](#) freedom of worship. On the other hand, Freedom of Religion is the ability to act, speak, and live by one’s religious convictions in public as well as private, without interference from the state. This freedom to practice one’s religious beliefs outside the chapel or synagogue is what is at stake in the

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ongoing battle for Freedom of Religion today--and what makes these two court rulings so significant:

First, on Monday May 5, the [United States Supreme Court affirmed](#) that Americans are free to continue to offer public prayers at town council meetings and other public gatherings. In a 5-4 ruling, the [Supreme Court stated](#) that government should not become “supervisors and censors of religious speech.”



We applaud the [Court's opinion](#) which acknowledges, “From the earliest days of the Nation, these invocations have been addressed to assemblies comprising many different creeds. These ceremonial prayers strive for the idea that people of many faiths may be united in a community of tolerance and devotion. . . The inclusion of a brief, ceremonial prayer as part of a larger exercise in civic recognition suggests that its purpose and effect are to acknowledge religious leaders and the institutions they represent rather than to exclude or coerce nonbelievers.”

As UFI writer [Diane Robertson summed up](#), “This is a victory for religious freedom in America. The war over the right to practice religion in public and in private is by no means over, but this ruling handed down by the Supreme Court on Monday is very good news!”



Secondly, on Friday May 9, the [Massachusetts Supreme Court unanimously ruled](#) that the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance are fully constitutional. The [court ruling explains](#) that the phrase “under God” “was intended to underscore that the American form of government was founded on the concept of the individuality and the dignity of the human being,

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which is grounded in ‘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 ruling also cites a 1963 legislative report which “identifies a number of historical statements and documents of the founding fathers and subsequent national leaders that refer expressly to ‘God,’ ‘Nature’s God,’ the ‘Creator,’ and like terms, and that reflect an understanding that the Nation was founded on a belief in God.”

In addition, the ruling states that the Pledge does not discriminate because, “All students are treated alike. They are free, if they choose, to recite the pledge or any part of it that they see fit.”

This important Massachusetts ruling was timely--just before the 60th anniversary of when the “under God” amendment passed by unanimous Congressional vote in June of 1954. Upon signing the bill, [President Eisenhower declared](#), "This law and its effects today have profound meaning. In this way we are reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America's heritage and future.”

Today we add our voices in reaffirming that **Religious Freedom is a critical part of the “heritage and future” of all successful societies.** We also invite you to read today’s beautiful discussion by recent graduate Janaya Johnson on why Religious Freedom matters to society.



Warm Regards,

Laura Bunker

President, [United Families International](#)

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In _____ We Trust

By Janaya Johnson

The well-known phrase IN GOD WE TRUST first appeared on a two-cent coin in 1864. Three years before that time, Reverend M. R. Watkinson wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase, requesting that God be acknowledged, in some way, on American currency. In response Secretary Chase sent Reverend Watkinson the following letter, "Dear Sir: No nation can be strong except in the strength of God, or safe except in His defense. The trust of our people in God should be declared on our national coins. You will cause a device to be prepared without unnecessary delay with a motto expressing in the fewest and tersest words possible this national recognition."



This exchange of letters began the road that led to the creation of the phrase that would, in 1956, become the national motto of the United States. IN GOD WE TRUST. It's on our coins and our paper money, it's our national motto, and yet, it seems as though trusting in God, especially through religious devotion, is no longer an acceptable or honorable thing to adhere to in our country. [Read more](#) ...

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