

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DEFENSE OF THE
PLEDGE DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH

The Source of our Unalienable Rights cannot be removed by stroke of a pen from a King or from a Congress.

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Texas' Attorney General Greg Abbott wrote an excellent op/ed piece in your September 16, 2005 issue of The Houston Chronicle newspaper. Mr. Abbott discussed some of the cultural and legal history of this issue. However, I felt that he did not go far enough to explain the basic, structural nature between Freedom and God in America. I respectfully submit the following additional arguments in support of our Pledge of Allegiance and its including the phrase, "One Nation Under God".

The hullabaloo and confusion over reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in schools or exhibiting the Ten Commandments in 'the public square' is an important reflection of our nation's increasing case of 'civics amnesia' over the last thirty or forty years. Our citizens and students, in large part, have not been taught the first and most fundamental philosophical concept of America. This educational deficiency is a very well-documented fact (for example, see *E Pluribus Unum* at www.bradleyproject.org). As a result, we Americans squabble among ourselves over the key founding philosophy of American – *a philosophy that should, unquestionably, unite us.*

This first and most fundamental idea of America is understanding the philosophical concept of FREEDOM. The Founders of our nation were not royalty – they were all common people without class distinctions, royal titles or nobility. This fact is extremely important. Americans then and now were and are all 'equally common' people. Through their intense study and hard work in educating themselves, the colonists came to understand that they were not free because King George declared them so or because Freedom was a birthright due to being a nobleman. Their intense studies taught them that they were free because they believed that a Creator endowed all men, including commoners, with the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. With the strength of their philosophical belief that their Freedom was a timeless, permanent gift from God and not a privilege granted by a monarch, the founders gathered the enormous internal strength to make the most radical decision to break away from their Motherland after concluding that King George would never voluntarily release his grip over his Subjects. This decision was terribly controversial at the time because the entire populace in the colonies was not fully educated or cognizant of the philosophical arguments and reasoning over the widening western civilization concept of Freedom and the rights of the individual.

From those calamitous days in the 18th century, Freedom in America has always been viewed as a gift from God because it affirms the critical philosophical idea, whether one is a believer or non-believer, that Freedom for us all is a never-ending, eternal or essentially 'spiritual' state of the human existence that cannot be removed or taken away by another human being. If one believes that one human has no right to impose or coerce another human, then it follows that the most important word in The Declaration of Independence is, arguably, 'unalienable'. That is to say that without the understanding of the idea that the gift of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are permanent and unchanging rights for all, then man is at the mercy of other men and any manmade law that can be given or taken away at any time by the stroke of a pen.

All true, thoughtful Americans have a very deep sense that all Americans, regardless of their belief or non-belief in a God, accept the philosophical Founding of America as, for the first time in history, being a nation conceived on this unique and new idea of the equality of all men in the eye of a Creator or a spiritual force that looks upon all human beings as totally equal.

Believers and Non-believers of a God or a Creator are historically both respected as equally important members of the American family. Believers and Non-Believers of a spiritual Creator have also always been equally ready and willing to defend this new and unique philosophical concept of Freedom because they both seem to know and understand that they are defending an idea, not a king or royal family. Non-Believers have always seemed to understand the fundamental connection between God and Freedom as a *historical fact* of the United States founding regardless of their personal beliefs.

The inclusion of God ‘in the public square’ through our Pledge of Allegiance, or a public display of the Ten Commandments or some other similar symbols should be a comforting and unifying tradition to all true Americans. Those public displays are not forcing any form of religion on any other citizen. These displays are simple reminders that America was designed and conceived on the fundamental concept that every person’s freedom was a natural, and God-given right emanating from a higher power than mortal man.

If the outward words ‘Under God’ were removed from the Pledge and other similar national symbols, words that the majority of Americans understand and appreciate, you can be sure that America would more quickly slide backwards toward tyranny and oppression of men dominating other men. Thomas Jefferson said it best, “If a National Expects to Remain Ignorant and Free, It Expects What Never Was and Never Will Be.”

Certainly we are not perfect---it took many more decades for our black brothers and sisters, for example, to achieve Freedom. But Jefferson and Washington, for example, two of the Founders who owned slaves because they were born into a pre-existing system of slavery, designed and put in place a system based on unalienable rights that would remain a permanent philosophical fact of America that would eventually result in the permanent Freedom for all slaves and their descendants. Did this take longer than it should – certainly. But lest any of us forget, it took 1776 years from Jesus’ birth (and thousands of years before that) for the commoner white man to light the first flicker of Freedom’s flame for himself and then to define it for all others in America’s remarkable, enlightened, virtuous and noble Declaration of Independence. Can Americans today preserve and strengthen this comforting and unifying idea? We can only hope so--and work to overcome the kind of ignorance in our schools and in our society that that our Founders knew was capable of destroying what they had designed.

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