

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

P.O. BOX 750 · MADISON, WI 53701 · (608) 256-8900 · WWW.FFRF.ORG

July 27, 2020

SENT VIA FAX & U.S. MAIL: 530-623-8365

Bobbi Chadwick
Chairman of the Board
Trinity County Board of Supervisors
11 Court St., Room 230
P.O. Box 1613
Weaverville, CA 96093

Re: Pending “In God We Trust” Display

Dear Chairman Chadwick and Trinity County Supervisors:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to urge you to reconsider your recent decision to place a display reading “In God We Trust” in your public meeting room. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 32,000 members across the country, including 4,300 in California, contacts in Weaverville and a chapter in Sacramento. Our purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation of state and church and educate the public about nontheism.

A concerned Trinity County resident has reported that you recently voted to display “In God We Trust” in a prominent location in the public meeting room where you convene at the Trinity County library in Weaverville.

It is inappropriate for the Trinity County Board of Supervisors to place “In God We Trust” on county property. Elected officials are elected to represent all citizens, not just religious ones, and should not use their government position and government property to promote religious views. Council members are elected to represent all residents of Trinity County, including the 26 percent of Americans who are not religious.¹ “In God We Trust” is not even accurate. For it to be accurate, it would have to read, “In God *Some* of Us Trust,” and that would make a very silly motto.

Citizens are frequently compelled to come before the board on important civic matters affecting their livelihood, their property, and their quality of life. These citizens should not be made to feel offended, excluded, or like political outsiders because the county government they support with their taxes oversteps its power by prominently placing a religious statement at the seat of

¹ *In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (Oct. 17, 2019), available at <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

government. Trinity County citizens place trust in their elected officials to attend to their elected secular duties.

Allotting time and property to messages about a deity is beyond the scope of secular government. The history of the motto “In God We Trust” evidences no secular purpose; on the contrary, the motto was first adopted during the Cold War as a reaction to the purported “godlessness” of communism. America’s original motto, “E Pluribus Unum” (out of many, come one), selected by a distinguished committee of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin, is purely secular and celebrates the idea of unity in diversity.

On behalf of our local membership, we urge you to reconsider your decision to place “In God We Trust” on county property. The Trinity County Board of Supervisors should respect the rights of conscience of all citizens, including those who in good conscience reject god belief.

Very truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Annie Laurie Gaylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Annie Laurie Gaylor
Co-President

ALG:cal