

Committee Report

REGULAR CALENDAR

March 23, 2021

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The Committee on Education to which was referred HB 69, relative to the display of the national motto in schools.

WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION

COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee:	Education
Bill Number:	HB 69
Title:	relative to the display of the national motto in schools.
Date:	March 23, 2021
Consent Calendar:	Regular Calendar
Recommendation:	WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION

Statement in support of Without Recommendation: This legislation is enabling legislation that allows for school boards to provide a poster or framed copy of the motto of the United States “In God We Trust” for display in each school building in the district. This legislation allows for schools to accept non-public fund or in-kind contributions to implement this. The committee could not come to agreement on this bill; therefore, there is no recommendation.

Rep. Deborah Hobson

Statement in support of Inexpedient to Legislate: This bill suggests that by our public schools displaying the national motto of, “In God We Trust,” it will result in many negative and unwanted consequences and therefore support an Inexpedient to Legislate motion. Our nation is going through a very divisive time. Do we need to display something that may create more acrimony and division in our public schools and charter schools? The bill’s sponsors recognized this fact by including a section that deals with the possibility of legal action against the school. In paragraph II, the Attorney General’s Office is required to ‘defend the display.’ No fiscal note accompanies this bill. A defense by the Attorney General’s Office could require considerable expenditures which should be stated in a fiscal note. More importantly, the displaying of this motto without context or accompanying educational material and instruction could be intimidating, unwanted, and unwelcoming to many in our multicultural society who do not share the same religious beliefs associated with the motto. We represent all our constituents and must, in good conscience, recognize the multicultural communities we represent. Our public schools need to be an open and welcoming place for all children to foster unity and appreciation for all students, parents, and staff regardless of their religious, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds.

Rep. Linda Tanner

Original: House Clerk
Cc: Committee Bill File

REGULAR CALENDAR

Education

HB 69, relative to the display of the national motto in schools. **WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION**
Statement in support of Without Recommendation: This legislation is enabling legislation that allows for school boards to provide a poster or framed copy of the motto of the United States “In God We Trust” for display in each school building in the district. This legislation allows for schools to accept non-public fund or in-kind contributions to implement this. The committee could not come to agreement on this bill; therefore, there is no recommendation.

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Statement in support of Inexpedient to Legislate: This bill suggests that by our public schools displaying the national motto of, “In God We Trust,” it will result in many negative and unwanted consequences and therefore support an Inexpedient to Legislate motion. Our nation is going through a very divisive time. Do we need to display something that may create more acrimony and division in our public schools and charter schools? The bill’s sponsors recognized this fact by including a section that deals with the possibility of legal action against the school. In paragraph II, the Attorney General’s Office is required to ‘defend the display.’ No fiscal note accompanies this bill. A defense by the Attorney General’s Office could require considerable expenditures which should be stated in a fiscal note. More importantly, the displaying of this motto without context or accompanying educational material and instruction could be intimidating, unwanted, and unwelcoming to many in our multicultural society who do not share the same religious beliefs associated with the motto. We represent all our constituents and must, in good conscience, recognize the multicultural communities we represent. Our public schools need to be an open and welcoming place for all children to foster unity and appreciation for all students, parents, and staff regardless of their religious, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds.

Rep. Linda Tanner

Original: House Clerk

Cc: Committee Bill File

Voting Sheets

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

EXECUTIVE SESSION on HB 69

BILL TITLE: relative to the display of the national motto in schools.

DATE: March 11, 2021

LOB ROOM: 301/303

MOTIONS: **OUGHT TO PASS**

Moved by Rep. Hobson

Seconded by Rep. Cordelli

Vote: 10-10

CONSENT CALENDAR: NO

Statement of Intent: Refer to Committee Report

Respectfully submitted,

Rep Barbara Shaw, Clerk



2021 SESSION

Education

Bill #: HB 69 Motion: OTP AM #: _____ Exec Session Date: 3-11-2021

<u>Members</u>	<u>YEAS</u>	<u>Nays</u>	<u>NV</u>
Ladd, Rick M. Chairman	✓		
Cordelli, Glenn Vice Chairman	✓		
Boehm, Ralph G.	✓		
Allard, James C.		✓	
Lekas, Alicia D.	✓		
Moffett, Michael	✓		
Hobson, Deborah L.	✓		
Andrus, Louise	✓		
Ford, Oliver J.	✓		
Layon, Erica J.	✓		
Soti, Julius F.	✓		
Myler, Mel		✓	
Luneau, David J.		✓	
Shaw, Barbara E. Clerk		✓	
Cornell, Patricia		✓	
Tanner, Linda L.		✓	
Ellison, Arthur S.		✓	
Mullen, Sue M.		✓	
Ley, Douglas A.		✓	
Woodcock, Stephen L.		✓	
TOTAL VOTE:	10	10	

no recommendation

Hearing Minutes

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

PUBLIC HEARING ON HB 69

BILL TITLE: relative to the display of the national motto in schools.

DATE: March 2, 2021

LOB ROOM: 201/203/Remote **Time Public Hearing Called to Order:** 2:00 PM

Time Adjourned: 2:12 PM

Committee Members: Reps. Ladd, Cordelli, Shaw, Boehm, Allard, A. Lekas, Moffett, Hobson, Andrus, Ford, Layon, Soti, Myler, Luneau, Cornell, Tanner, Ellison, Mullen, Ley and Woodcock

Bill Sponsors:

Rep. True

Rep. Piemonte

Rep. Folsom

Rep. Abramson

Rep. Torosian

Rep. Greene

Rep. Hobson

TESTIMONY

* Use asterisk if written testimony and/or amendments are submitted.

Rep. True – Bill Sponsor

- Grants schools right to display the national motto in schools
- Not an infringement on rights – strictly a “motto” of our country since 1955
- Most states have state motto – first a “motto” and national “motto” just the same

Carl Ladd – NHSAA

- “In God We Trust” was adopted in 1956 replace “ E Pluribus Unum”
- “In God We Trust” should not be forced on children in a school. It can be used to expose as a “motto” but not placed in a school

Respectfully submitted,

Rep. Barbara Shaw, Clerk

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

BILL TITLE: PUBLIC HEARING on Bill # HB 69
DATE: display the national motto in schools
3-2-2021

ROOM: 201-203 Time Public Hearing Called to Order: 2:00 PM
Time Adjourned: 2:12 PM

(please circle if present) all present

Committee Members: Reps. Ladd, Cordelli, Shaw, Boehm, Allard, A. Lekas, Moffett, Hobson, Andrus, Ford, Layon, Soti, Myler, Luneau, Cornell, Tanner, Ellison, Mullen, Ley and Woodcock

TESTIMONY

* Use asterisk if written testimony and/or amendments are submitted.

① Rep. True (Chris) sponsor
• grants schools right to display the national motto in schools
• not an infringement on rights - strictly a "motto" of our country since 1955
• most states have state motto - just a "motto" and national "motto" just the same.

② Carl Ladd - NHTSAA -
"In God We Trust" was adopted in 1956 replace "E Pluribus Unum"
"In God We Trust" should not be forced on children in a school. It can be used & exposed as a "motto" but not placed in a school.

Respectfully submitted,
Rep. Barbara Shaw,
Clerk

House Remote Testify

Education Committee Testify List for Bill HB69 on 2021-03-02

Support: 6 Oppose: 44 Neutral: 0 Total to Testify: 1

Export to Excel

<u>Name</u>	<u>City, State</u> <u>Email Address</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Testifying</u>	<u>Signed Up</u>
true, chris	sandown, NH true03873@comcast.net	An Elected Official	Myself	Support	Yes (3m)	2/28/2021 11:02 AM
Bruce, Susan	Concord, NH susanb.red@mac.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	2/28/2021 11:14 AM
Ladd, Carl	Concord, NH carl@nhsaa.org	A Lobbyist	New Hampshire School Administrators Association	Oppose	No	2/28/2021 1:37 PM
Fordey, Nikki	Litchfield, NH nikkif610@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	2/28/2021 3:21 PM
Campbell, Kay	Epsom, NH kkcampbell43@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	2/28/2021 3:38 PM
Nelson, Elizabeth	Derry, NH BethDavid@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	2/28/2021 5:11 PM
Frostholm, Margaret	Concord, NH pfrostholm@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	2/28/2021 7:33 PM
Larson, Ruth	Alton, NH ruthlarson@msn.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	2/28/2021 7:43 PM
Smith, Sara	Pembroke, NH sara.rose.ssmith@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	2/28/2021 8:39 PM
Pedersen, Michael	Nashua, NH PedersenUSA@aim.com	An Elected Official	Hillsborough 32	Oppose	No	2/28/2021 10:30 PM
Lucas, Janet	Campton, NH janluca1953@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/1/2021 8:56 AM
DeMark, Richard	Meredith, NH demarknh114@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/1/2021 2:23 PM
House, Don	Belmont, NH donhouse@metrocast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/1/2021 9:59 AM

Myers, Patrice	Concord, NH 2009awsn@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	3/1/2021 10:54 AM
Minihan, Jeremiah	Rochester, NH Jeremiah.minihan@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/1/2021 1:37 PM
Davis, Johnna	Gilford, NH jdavis@metrocast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	3/1/2021 5:31 PM
Nartowicz, Nikolas	Washington, DC nartowicz@au.org	A Lobbyist	Americans United for Separation of Church and State	Oppose	No	3/1/2021 5:36 PM
Hruska, Jeanne	Concord, NH Jeanne@aclu-nh.org	A Lobbyist	ACLU-NH	Oppose	No	3/1/2021 6:47 PM
Hope, Lucinda	Tilton, NH lmhope46@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/1/2021 7:47 PM
Dunham, Bonnie	Merrimack, NH Bsdunham12@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/1/2021 8:11 PM
Downing, George	Keene, NH gdowning@sau29.org	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	3/1/2021 10:03 PM
Anastasia, Patti	LONDONDERRY, NH patti.anastasia@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/1/2021 10:05 PM
Perrault, Lisa	Northfield, NH LisaMPerrault@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 10:47 AM
Snyder, Patricia	Durham, NH penguinbird2@hotmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 10:58 AM
Goggans, Ron	NH, NH rongoggans@gmail.com	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 11:10 AM
Talbot, Michelle	Gilford, NH mishi4357@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 11:19 AM
Folsom, Beth	WENTWORTH, NH beth.folsom@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Myself	Support	No	3/2/2021 8:32 AM
Cunningham, Shela	Belmont, NH shelacunningham@metrocast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 8:42 AM
Howard Jr., Raymond	Alton, NH brhowardjr@yahoo.com	An Elected Official	Myself	Support	No	3/2/2021 8:43 AM
Wahl, BJ	NH, NH bjwahl@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 9:14 AM
Switzer, Bob	Sullivan, NH macswitz@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 9:19 AM

Frost, Sherry	Dover, NH sherry.frost@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 9:20 AM
Caplan, Elise	Grantham, NH elisegrila@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 9:37 AM
Reed, Judith	Keene, NH jureed@keene.edu	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 9:49 AM
Hurley, John	CLAREMONT, NH jrhurjd@aol.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 10:20 AM
Chouinard, Victor	Chester, NH vchouinard@gsinet.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 10:22 AM
Chandler, William	Stratham, NH chandlwc1@hotmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 10:24 AM
Dionne, Linda	Raymond, NH lindld@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 11:53 AM
Banfield, Ann Marie	North Hampton, NH Banfieldannmarie@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	3/2/2021 2:05 PM
Wulf, MB.	Goffstown, NH flowerofthebriar@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 3:27 PM
Hurley, Margaret	claremont, NH mdaishhurley@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 5:58 PM
Morrissey, William	New Boston, NH qmorrissey@aol.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 6:07 PM
Centre, Bart	Langdon, NH rtofcentre@msn.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/2/2021 6:24 PM
Culliton, Penny	Temple, NH pculliton@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	2/26/2021 3:44 PM
Tentarelli, Liz	Newbury, NH LWV@kenliz.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	2/27/2021 11:16 AM
Burk-McCoy, Lisa	Exeter, NH Lburkmccoy@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	2/27/2021 3:01 PM
Kusch, Dan	Center Sandwich, NH Dan.kusch@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	2/27/2021 12:37 PM
Vogt, Robin	Portsmouth, NH robin.w.vogt@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	2/27/2021 3:59 PM
Casino, Joanne	Concord, NH joannecasino@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	2/28/2021 10:32 AM

Snyder, Kristina

Chester, NH
khsnyder22@yahoo.com

A Member of the Public

Myself

Oppose


No

2/28/2021 10:50 AM

Testimony

Archived: Thursday, March 18, 2021 11:38:30 AM
From: [BJ Wahl](#)
Sent: Tuesday, March 2, 2021 9:03:36 AM
To: [~House Education Committee](#)
Subject: HB69 - please oppose this bill
Importance: Normal

Please vote No on HB69, which seeks to put “In God We Trust” in all classrooms. NH and VT are the two least religious states in the union and so many of us would find this offensive. It is also trying to indoctrinate innocent children into believing in something that may be against their own religion or lack thereof. The church and the home are the place for religion, not government funded buildings. Thank you for your consideration,
BJ Wahl and Bob Switzer
Sullivan NH

“The idea that some lives matter less is the root of all that is wrong with the world.”
Dr. Paul Farmer 

Archived: Thursday, March 18, 2021 11:38:30 AM

From: M H

Sent: Tuesday, March 2, 2021 11:23:53 AM

To: ~House Education Committee

Subject: NH House Remote Testify: 2:00 pm - HB69 in House Education

Importance: Normal

As a New Hampshire voter, I am asking that you vote no on HB 69, which needlessly permits public schools to display "In God We Trust" in every building.

This bill is part of a broader push toward Christian nationalism known as Project Blitz. The motto "In God We Trust" is inaccurate, exclusionary and aimed at brainwashing American schoolchildren into believing that our nation is a theocracy.

This committee's time would be better spent addressing actual issues in our public schools rather than pandering to the Religious Right and creating unnecessary rules that force religion on our children under the veil of patriotism. Please vote no on HB 69.

Separation of Church and State must be upheld!!

Regards,
Michelle Talbot
320 Old Lake Shore Rd
Gilford, NH 03249

Archived: Thursday, March 18, 2021 11:38:29 AM

From: B. Centre

Sent: Tuesday, March 2, 2021 6:26:33 PM

To: ~House Education Committee

Subject: NH House Remote Testify: 2:00 pm - HB69 in House Education

Importance: Normal

As a New Hampshire voter, I am asking that you vote no on HB 69, which needlessly permits public schools to display "In God We Trust" in every building.

This bill is part of a broader push toward Christian nationalism known as Project Blitz. The motto "In God We Trust" is inaccurate, exclusionary and aimed at brainwashing American schoolchildren into believing that our nation is a theocracy.

This committee's time would be better spent addressing actual issues in our public schools rather than pandering to the Religious Right and creating unnecessary rules that force religion on our children under the veil of patriotism. Please vote no on HB 69.

Regards,
Bart Centre
260 Holden Hill Rd
Langdon, NH 03602

Archived: Thursday, March 18, 2021 11:38:30 AM
From: [Jeanne Hruska](#)
Sent: Monday, March 1, 2021 5:58:18 PM
To: ~House Education Committee
Subject: ACLU-NH statement on HB69
Importance: Normal

Dear Representatives,

I'm writing to share the ACLU-NH's opposition to HB69, which would allow a school board to "provide a durable poster or framed copy of the national motto of the United States, 'In God We Trust' for display in each school building in the district."



All students—those of any faith or those of none—should feel safe and welcome in our public schools. This bill sends a thinly veiled message that only students who believe in God are welcome. No student should feel pressured in public school to adopt certain religious beliefs. Parents, not school officials, are responsible for shaping their children's religious education.

HB69 would not improve our schools or enhance educational outcomes. Instead, it risks impeding the learning environment by seemingly endorsing some religions over others. Students should feel welcome in our schools regardless of their faith or their absence of faith.

For these reasons, the ACLU-NH respectfully urges the members of the House Education Committee to vote *inexpedient to legislate* on HB69. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,
Jeanne

Jeanne Hruska
Pronouns: she, hers

Political Director
American Civil Liberties Union of New Hampshire
18 Low Avenue, Concord, NH 03301
(c) 307-272-8727 | jeanne@aclu-nh.org
aclu-nh.org  



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Archived: Tuesday, April 6, 2021 9:04:20 AM

From: [Patti Anastasia](#)

Sent: Monday, March 1, 2021 10:36:28 PM

To: ~House Education Committee

Cc: [Al Baldasaro](#); [Betsy McKinney](#); [Doug Thomas](#); elephantsmarching@msn.com; [David Lundgren](#); [Sherman Packard](#); [Tom Dolan](#); [Sharon Carson](#)

Subject: Testimony for bills in the House Education Committee

Importance: Normal

Hello,

I have registered my support or opposition for bills that will be heard in the 3/2 House Education Committee hearing. This is my testimony related to some of those bills.

HB422 - I am opposed to this bill. It takes local control away from school districts. School districts should continue to be allowed to determine how they meet this requirement.

HB 319 — I am opposed to this bill. While I believe that it would be beneficial to society to have ALL adult citizens, this requirement is too vague It costs approximately \$700 to take the test. This will be a burden on many students. This bill seems poorly researched and written.

HB 69 — I am opposed to this bill. The national motto of In God We Trust is a nonsecular statement. It alienates anyone who does not believe in God. I do not support a national motto that is based in religion, nor do I want it to be posted in schools.

regards,
Patti Anastasia
Londonderry

HB68: a response

Hi all. My name is Julien Davis, I'm a resident of Gilford, New Hampshire, and I have many concerns about this bill. Thankfully most of the speakers who were able to testify at the last hearing have clarified the process of transitioning during childhood, so I won't waste time by reiterating those details. However, I do want to quickly touch upon the subject of intersex children. There's a section of the bill that allows for the surgical alteration of children whose genitals are ambiguous at birth. Such procedures are incredibly harmful for these children both physically and psychologically, as intersex people who have had these surgeries report experiencing nerve damage and scarring in their genitals, thereby impairing the function of their sex organs. In addition to that, when forced to assimilate to a gender that their anatomy is most easily associated with, some of these people develop gender dysphoria in a very similar way to how non-intersex trans people develop dysphoria. Due to this potential to cause great harm to intersex children, these individuals should be given the room to decide for themselves if they want surgery in the future rather than being forced into surgical intervention before they can speak, and I find it almost laughable that the same politicians who voice outrage over the imaginary occurrence of a child receiving SRS would permit that very same procedure in intersex kids for the sake of conformity.

This bill is quite personally significant to me. I'm a trans person and although I came to that conclusion as a young adult, I think about what life could have been like had I access to blockers and HRT at a younger age. It is incredibly uplifting to hear the testimony of trans youth who have had the opportunity to express themselves before adulthood, but for me, there's a bitterness to these sweet stories of self discovery. I find myself mourning

the boy I never got to be, and thinking of the 20 years worth of photos and home videos my family and friends have that I cannot cherish because the person in those photos is not me. I think about all the times I posed for one of these pictures or tried on an outfit at a clothing store expecting to see myself as the person I felt I was, only to be overcome with shock, disappointment, and dread upon looking at the photo or gazing in the mirror. I remembered all the times I listened for the call of my deadname during attendance in class and cringed at the fact that I knew I'd have to say "here" in response. And yes, like many people who identify as trans, I am forever marked by the painful memories of thoughts and attempts at suicide.

The truth of the matter is, when I was growing up, I existed in a vice grip of standards and expectations that I could never meet. From the day that I was born to the day I realized why I felt so out of place, so removed from reality at all times, I was imprisoned both by my physical body and the set of roles and characteristics arbitrarily assigned to me by a doctor who took one look at my infantile body and said "it's a girl." I'm grateful to have come as far as I have under those severe circumstances, and I can finally say that the person I am out here matches the me in my head, but I can't get those 20 years of memories back, and it pains me to think that our state legislature might take from the trans youth of today two whole decades of their lives as well.

Of course, Representative Testerman, having never experienced dysphoria himself or fathered a transgender child, has no understanding of what this is like. I don't fault him for that. I do, however, fault him for being purposefully obstinate in the face of countless statistical figures and data points surrounding this topic, and for being unwilling to listen to the

accounts of those of us who do have a personal stake in this game. This man quite literally left the first hearing just prior to the response forum, which raises a question in my mind and, I'm sure, in the minds of many others who testified as well: why did Representative Testerman leave during the hearing? Perhaps he knew his ideas would not hold steadfast in the face of the opposition, or perhaps he didn't want to hear a slough of personal anecdotes about the lives of various trans teens and parents of trans children, whom I would like to add, he is supposed to represent as an official of the New Hampshire House of Representatives. Either way, the message that I and my fellow citizens of the state of New Hampshire seek to convey applies. Representative Testerman, not only are your assertions on the matter faulty, their implications are dangerous.



Nikolas Nartowicz
State Policy Counsel

(202) 466-3234
(202) 898-0955 (fax)
americansunited@au.org

1310 L Street NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005

March 1, 2021

The Honorable Rick Ladd
Chair
Education Committee
New Hampshire House of Representatives
107 North Main Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

The Honorable Glenn Cordelli
Vice Chair
Education Committee
New Hampshire House of Representatives
107 North Main Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: Oppose HB 69 – “In God We Trust” Displays Are Constitutionally Suspect

Dear Chair Ladd and Vice Chair Cordelli:

On behalf of the New Hampshire members and supporters of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, I write to express our opposition to HB 69, which would allow the posting of “In God We Trust” in all New Hampshire public schools. The real goal of bills like this is not to display the national motto but to use the public schools to promote a belief in God. That these bills are a priority of Project Blitz, a coordinated national effort by the Religious Right to enshrine Christian nationalism in state laws, makes the religious intent even clearer. This bill, therefore, should be rejected.

The Bill Is Constitutionally Suspect

The First Amendment of the Constitution requires that legislation have a “secular legislative purpose”¹ and prohibits the government from communicating a message that it endorses or disapproves of religion.² Courts are “particularly vigilant in monitoring compliance with the Establishment Clause in elementary and secondary schools”³ because students are “impressionable, and their attendance is involuntary.”⁴ The motto, however, asserts that Americans believe in God, and the placement of the motto on public school walls sends a message to students that their public school wants them to hold that belief as well.

The real goal of bills like HB 69 is to use our public schools to promote a belief in God. That is clear because this bill is a part of Project Blitz, a nationwide campaign to impose far-right evangelical Christian views on everyone, including our public school students.⁵ The Project

¹ *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602, 612 (1971). See also *Stone v. Graham*, 449 U.S. 39 (1980) (holding that an “avowed” secular purpose is not sufficient to avoid conflict with the First Amendment).

² *Cnty. of Allegheny v. ACLU Greater Pittsburgh Chapter*, 492 U.S. 573, 592–94 (1989).

³ *Edwards v. Aguillard*, 482 U.S. 578, 583–84 (1987).

⁴ *Id.* at 584.

⁵ Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, [Report and Analysis on Religious Freedom Measures Impacting Prayer and Faith in America \(2018-19 Version\)](#), 4-7, last accessed February 28, 2021.

Blitz playbook initially focuses on public school students with “In God We Trust” and Bible class bills and then escalates to promote bills that would misuse religious freedom to allow discrimination. This includes bills that allow taxpayer-funded agencies to turn away couples seeking to foster or adopt children in need of stable and loving homes because they are same-sex or the “wrong” religion.⁶ Ultimately, Project Blitz aims to transform religious freedom from a shield that protects to a sword that harms others. I have enclosed with this letter a statement from 43 national organizations, including 24 religious and denominational organizations, that oppose the Project Blitz playbook.

Public Schools Are Diverse and All Students and Parents Should Be Welcome

Families and students in New Hampshire practice a variety of religions and faiths, including many who are nonreligious. Encouraging an “In God We Trust” display in public schools, however, promotes a specific religious perspective and necessarily excludes members of the community whose religious views do not align with the majority. Freedom of religion means that parents—not school officials or state legislatures—have the right to direct their children’s religious education and should be able to entrust that their children will not have a particular religious perspective forced on them while attending our public schools. It also means that all students should feel welcome, not just those who follow a particular religion.

The Sponsors Should Instead Support a Bill on E Pluribus Unum Displays

Although supporters of bills like this claim that the words “In God We Trust” are deeply rooted in our country’s religious history, a look at the motto’s history reveals that the Founding Fathers never intended these words—or any other religious reference—to become our country’s motto. In fact, when originally commissioned to create a Great Seal for the country, our Founders, including Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams, devised the motto as: E Pluribus Unum, meaning “from many, one.”⁷ Congress did not authorize the use of “In God We Trust” as the national motto until 1956.⁸ Displaying our original motto—E Pluribus Unum—would bring students together, not divide people by lifting up some faiths above others.

For all of the above reasons, we urge you to reject HB 69 and instead to consider a more neutral and inclusive motto to display, such as E Pluribus Unum.

Sincerely,



Nikolas Nartowicz
State Policy Counsel

cc: Members of the House Education Committee

⁶ *Id.* at 88.

⁷ Paula A. Franzese, *E Pluribus Unum – From Many, One: In Unity There Is Strength*, 25 Seton Hall L. Rev. 1460, 1460 (1995).

⁸ 36 U.S.C. §186 (1956); *See Gaylor v. United States*, 74 F.3d 214, 216 (10th Cir. 1996).

Statement from 43 National Organizations United in Opposition to Project Blitz and Similar Legislative Efforts

Religious freedom is a fundamental American value. It is a shield that protects everyone—the religious and nonreligious alike. Yet, an alarming effort is underway to harness the power of the government to impose the faith of some onto everyone else, including our public school students. This effort seeks to transform religious freedom into a sword that can be used to harm others, undermining important civil rights protections and healthcare access, especially for women, LGBTQ people, those of minority faiths, and the nonreligious.

We are united against these efforts.

In particular, we oppose “Project Blitz,” a new and coordinated national effort to enshrine Christian nationalism in state laws across the country. Project Blitz promotes a three-tiered framework of state bills meant to incrementally redefine religious freedom and tear down the separation of church and state, with each tier laying the groundwork for the next. This framework starts by pushing what its authors believe will be less controversial measures, such as requiring “In God We Trust” to be posted in public schools. Using those bills as a foothold, it then seeks to pass more dangerous legislation, like bills that allow taxpayer-funded agencies to turn away couples seeking to foster or adopt children in need of stable and loving homes because they are same-sex or the “wrong” religion.

The separation of church and state, however, is the linchpin of religious freedom and a hallmark of our democracy. It ensures that each person has the right to choose whether to practice a religion or be nonreligious without pressure from the government. It safeguards houses of worship from intrusion by the government and, at the same time, prevents religious institutions from harnessing the power of government to impose their religion on others. It protects parents who want to send their children to public schools without fear that they will be proselytized or forced to pray according to someone else’s faith tradition. And, it prohibits the government from allowing the use of religion to evade laws that protect civil rights and access to healthcare, including reproductive healthcare.

Therefore, we urge legislators across the country to oppose Project Blitz and similar legislative efforts. America—and religious freedom—are stronger when the government gives no religion or set of beliefs more power or preference than any other and when everyone is welcome and treated equally under the law.

African American Ministers in Action
Alliance of Baptists
American Atheists
American Civil Liberties Union
Americans United for Separation of Church
and State
Anti-Defamation League
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Bend the Arc Jewish Action

Catholics for Choice
Center for Inquiry
Center for Reproductive Rights
Disciples Center for Public Witness
Disciples Justice Action Network
Ecumenical Poverty Initiative
The Episcopal Church
Equal Partners in Faith
Equality Federation

Family Equality Council
Freedom for All Americans
Freedom From Religion Foundation
Hindu American Foundation
Human Rights Campaign
Interfaith Alliance
Lambda Legal
Muslim Advocates
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender
Equality
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National LGBTQ Task Force Action
Fund
National Partnership for Women &
Families

People For the American Way
Political Research Associates
Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington
Office of Public Witness
Religious Coalition for Reproductive
Choice
Religious Institute
Secular Coalition for America
T'Ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human
Rights
The United Methodist Church - General
Board of Church & Society
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church of Christ, Justice and
Witness Ministries

3/2/2021

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the Education Committee.

For the record, I am Representative Chris True, Rockingham District Four, comprising the towns of Auburn, Chester, and Sandown.

Thank you for allowing me to speak on HB69, AN ACT, relative to the display of the national motto in schools.

Please allow me to start by saying those four words you all want to hear: I will be brief.

New Hampshire is a Dillon Rule state. Basically, Dillon's Rule says that unless a political subdivision has been specifically granted the authority, it does not have the authority to act.

HB69 is enabling legislation, it is granting a school the authority to display the national motto of the United States of America in school buildings.

If the school does not have the funds to provide a durable poster or framed copy of the national motto, a school may accept nonpublic funds or in kind

contributions so that the national motto can be displayed in the school.

In our recent history, there have been many attempts to have the national motto removed from government building and even the US currency.

In 2018 the Eighth Circuit Court ruled that the national motto on US currency was not unconstitutional. In 2019 the US Supreme Court rejected the suit claiming the national motto on US currency was unconstitutional.

Since there are groups in the United States that have the time and financial backing to bring suit, perhaps the mere threat of a law suit against a school for posting the national motto would be enough to stop a school from displaying the national motto, for fear of a costly court case.

That is why this bill would protect our schools from any law suits. If the displaying of our county's national motto were to be challenged in court, the office of the Attorney General of New Hampshire would defend the school in court.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Archived: Thursday, March 18, 2021 11:38:30 AM

From: [Lucinda Hope](#)

Sent: Monday, March 1, 2021 7:59:23 PM

To: [~House Education Committee](#)

Subject: Constituent OPPOSED to HB69

Importance: Normal

Members of the House Ed. Committee,

I am strongly opposed to HB69. Displaying a religious belief in our public school is wrong for many reasons.

There are many different beliefs and non-beliefs held by people who use our public schools.

Displaying a statement of a belief is a form of disrespect and discrimination.

The mission of a public place of learning is not to be a place for a particular religious statement.

Sincerely,

Lucinda Hope, M.Ed.

Bill as
Introduced

HB 69 - AS INTRODUCED

2021 SESSION

21-0028

06/10

HOUSE BILL **69**

AN ACT relative to the display of the national motto in schools.

SPONSORS: Rep. True, Rock. 4; Rep. Abramson, Rock. 37; Rep. Greene, Hills. 37; Rep. Piemonte, Rock. 4; Rep. Torosian, Rock. 14; Rep. Hobson, Rock. 35; Rep. Folsom, Graf. 11

COMMITTEE: Education

ANALYSIS

This bill permits school boards to provide copies of the national motto of the United States for display in each school building in the district.

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.
Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough.]~~
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty One

AN ACT relative to the display of the national motto in schools.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

1 1 New Section; State Motto. Amend RSA 189 by inserting after section 17-a the following new
2 section:

3 189:17-b State Motto.

4 I. To the extent funds are available, a school board may provide a durable poster or framed
5 copy of the national motto of the United States, "In God We Trust" for display in each school building
6 in the district. A school board may accept nonpublic funds or in-kind contributions to implement
7 this section.

8 II. In the event the display of the national motto is challenged in court, the office of the
9 attorney general shall defend the display. The school and the school board shall be held harmless for
10 complying with this section.

11 2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect 60 days after its passage.