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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE BILL

No. 1012 Session of  
2005

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INTRODUCED BY CREIGHTON, ARMSTRONG, BASTIAN, BENNINGHOFF, DALEY,  
ELLIS, FORCIER, GEIST, HERSHEY, LEH, PETRARCA, PHILLIPS,  
READSHAW, ROHRER, STERN AND R. STEVENSON, MARCH 16, 2005

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, MARCH 16, 2005

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AN ACT

1 Providing for the display of the national motto "In God We  
2 Trust" in classrooms and other areas in public school  
3 buildings.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Short title.

7 This act shall be known and may be cited as the National  
8 Motto Display Act.

9 Section 2. Legislative findings.

10 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

11 (1) The motto "In God We Trust" is part of the history  
12 and heritage of the United States. The nature of the  
13 patriotic motto was borne by the blood of our nation's  
14 forefathers who fought and died giving birth to our nation in  
15 1776. The motto was further forged in the fire and smoke of  
16 the Civil War. Recently, the motto has served as a rallying  
17 cry for a nation reeling from the terrorist attacks of  
18 September 11, 2001.

1           (2) The motto "In God We Trust" is featured on all  
2 United States currency. This practice first occurred in April  
3 of 1864 when Congress approved the use of the motto on United  
4 States two-cent pieces. Since then, the motto has been  
5 inscribed on most denominations of coins in an uninterrupted  
6 period of time extending from the present back to 1916. In  
7 1955, Congress passed a bill to have the motto placed on  
8 paper currency and it first appeared on bills two years  
9 later. Since 1957, the United States Bureau of Engraving and  
10 Printing has gradually incorporated the motto in the design  
11 on the reverse of all paper currency.

12           (3) In 1956, the United States Congress adopted the  
13 motto "In God We Trust" as the national motto. It is  
14 currently codified at 36 U.S.C. § 302 (relating to national  
15 motto). On July 24, 2000, the United States House of  
16 Representatives, along with the concurrence of the Senate,  
17 unanimously resolved to encourage the display of the national  
18 motto of the United States in public buildings throughout the  
19 nation.

20           (4) A proper understanding of United States history and  
21 government is essential to good citizenship. Public schools  
22 are the primary public institutions charged with the  
23 responsibility of assisting children and youth in gaining  
24 that understanding. A proper understanding of United States  
25 history and government includes study of historical documents  
26 such as:

27           (i) The Declaration of Independence.

28           (ii) The Constitution of the United States.

29           (iii) The pledge of allegiance.

30           (iv) The national anthem.

1 (v) The national motto.

2 (vi) The Mayflower Compact.

3 (vii) The writings, speeches, documents and  
4 proclamations of the founders and United States  
5 presidents.

6 (viii) Documents from the pre-Colonial, Colonial,  
7 Revolutionary, Federalist and post-Federalist eras.

8 (ix) United States Supreme Court decisions.

9 (5) To increase student understanding of and familiarity  
10 with American historical documents, historically important  
11 excerpts from or copies of such documents should be posted in  
12 classrooms and other areas of public school buildings.

13 (6) The Federal 5th, 9th and 10th Circuit Courts have  
14 ruled that displaying the national motto passes  
15 constitutional muster so long as the purpose of the display  
16 is to advance or endorse the national motto rather than a  
17 particular religious belief or practice.

18 Section 3. Display of motto.

19 The board of directors of every public elementary and  
20 secondary school in this Commonwealth may permit administrators  
21 and teachers in each public school to prominently display the  
22 motto "In God We Trust," which is declared in 36 U.S.C. § 302  
23 (relating to national motto) to be the national motto of the  
24 United States, in each classroom, school cafeteria and school  
25 auditorium.

26 Section 4. Effective date.

27 This act shall take effect in 60 days.