

The Pledge of Allegiance

In 1892, Francis Bellamy wrote the first version of the Pledge of Allegiance. It appeared in the Boston-based youth magazine *The Youth's Companion*, and was intended to be a recitation for school children in honor of the 400th anniversary of Columbus Discovering America. The original version was 22 words:

*I pledge allegiance to my Flag,
and to the Republic for which it stands:
one Nation indivisible,
With Liberty and Justice for all.*

After the Columbus Day Celebration, the Pledge to the Flag became a popular daily routine for more than 12 million school children. It wasn't until 1923 that the pledge gained national attention. A group of adults had gathered in Washington D.C. on June 14th for the first National Flag Conference. There was concern among the attendees who feared that the words "my flag" might cause some confusion among the number of new immigrants now living in the United States. To prevent this confusion the pledge was changed to read:

*I pledge allegiance to ~~my~~ the
Flag of the United States,
and to the Republic for which it stands:
one Nation indivisible,
With Liberty and Justice for all.*

After the changes, school children continued to recite the pledge as part of their daily routine. The pledge became increasingly popular during the patriotic wave during World War II and was included in the United States Flag code (Title 36) on June 22, 1942. A year later, however, the U.S. Supreme court ruled that school children could not be forced to recite the pledge as part of their daily routine. In 1945 the Pledge to the Flag received its official title: The Pledge of Allegiance.

The last change to the Pledge of Allegiance was on June 14 (Flag Day), 1954. President Dwight D. Eisenhower approved of the addition "under God" to the Pledge. His reasoning: "In this way we are reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America's heritage and future; in this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country's most powerful resource in peace and war." The new 31-word version reads:

*I pledge allegiance to the Flag
of the United States of America,
and to the Republic for which it stands:
one Nation under God, indivisible,
With Liberty and Justice for all.*

The Pledge of Allegiance transformed from a Columbus Day Celebration to a profession of loyalty and devotion to the flag and to the American way of life.

The following chart* breaks down the pledge so you may fully understand its meaning.

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|-----------------------|---|
| I Pledge Allegiance | I Promise to be faithful and true (Promise my loyalty) |
| to the flag | to the emblem that stands for and represents |
| of the United States | all 50 states, each of them individual, and individually represented on the flag |
| of America | yet formed into a UNION of one Nation. |
| and to the Republic | And I also pledge my loyalty to the Government that is itself a Republic, a form of government where the PEOPLE are sovereign, |
| for which it stands, | this government also being represented by the Flag to which I promise loyalty. |
| one Nation under God, | These 50 individual states are united as a single Republic under the Divine providence of God, "our most powerful resource" (according to the words of President Eisenhower) |
| Indivisible, | and can not be separated. (This part of the original version of the pledge was written just 50 years after the beginning of the Civil War and demonstrates the unity sought in the years after that divisive period in our history) |
| with Liberty | The people of this Nation being afforded the freedom to pursue "life, liberty, and happiness", |
| and Justice | And each person entitled to be treated justly, fairly, and according to proper law and principle, |
| for All. | And these principles afforded to EVERY AMERICAN, regardless of race, religion, color, creed, or any other criteria. Just as the flag represents 50 individual states that can not be divided or separated, this Nation represents millions of people who can not be separated or divided. |

* http://www.homeofheroes.com/hallofheroes/1st_floor/flag/1bfc_pledge.html

*Thus it is that when you Pledge Allegiance to the United States Flag, You:

- ◆ Promise your loyalty to the Flag itself.
- ◆ Promise your loyalty to your own and the other 49 states.
- ◆ Promise your loyalty to the Government that unites us all,
Recognizing that we are ONE Nation under God,
That we can not or should not be divided or alone,
And understanding the right to Liberty and Justice belongs to ALL of us.

Quiz

- 1) Where was the Pledge first published?
 - a) *Boston Gazette*
 - b) *The Youth's Companion*
 - c) The Constitution

- 2) How many changes has the pledge gone through?
 - a) 1
 - b) 2
 - c) 3

- 3) Who wrote the original version of the Pledge to the Flag?
 - a) Francis Bellamy
 - b) Francis Scott Key
 - c) Dwight Eisenhower

- 4) In what year were the words "under God" added?
 - a) 1892
 - b) 1923
 - c) 1954

- 5) Why was the Pledge written?
 - a) To celebrate Columbus Day
 - b) To celebrate Flag Day
 - c) To celebrate Columbus's birthday