

# The National Motto

## History

On July 4, 1776 a committee was formed by order of the Continental Congress, to research and create a national motto and seal for the newly formed nation. The committee was made up of three important founding fathers: Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams. The Nation's first motto was accepted on September 2, 1776 during a meeting in which Congress declared that this new nation would be called the "United States." The new motto was "E Pluribus Unum," which is Latin for "Out of many, one." It stands as a reminder, that out of many states, one new nation was born. A second meaning references the United State as a melting pot. Out of many immigrants, one nation was created.

In 1956, Congress passed a joint resolution to replace the national motto with "*In God we Trust*." On July 30, 1956, President Dwight Eisenhower signed the resolution into law. This was during the era of the Cold War with the Soviet Union (Russia) and the change was partly motivated by a desire to make a distinction between communism, which promotes Atheism (no beliefs), and Western capitalistic democracies (USA), which were for the most part Christian.

The new motto, can be traced back to the 1814 and Francis Scott-Key's original version of the *Star Spangled Banner*. The final stanza reads:

\* And this be our motto: '*In God is our trust.*'  
And the Star Spangled Banner in triumph shall wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

\* [http://www.religioustolerance.org/nat\\_mott.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/nat_mott.htm)

In 1864, the words were shortened to "*In God We Trust*" and applied to a newly designed two-cent coin. The motto IN GOD WE TRUST was placed on United States coins mainly because of the increased religious sentiment that existed during the Civil War. The Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase, received many appeals from spiritual persons throughout the country, urging the United States to recognize God on United States coins. The new motto didn't appear on paper money until 1957, when it was added to the one-dollar silver certificate. By 1966, it was added to all paper money.



The two cent coin



Close up of the motto on the two cent coin



A Modern twenty dollar bill

## Quiz

- 1) What was the nation's first motto?
  - a) In God we trust
  - b) E Pluribus Unum
  - c) God Bless America
  
- 2) What does E Pluribus Unum mean in English?
  - a) Out of many, one
  - b) In God we trust
  - c) United we stand
  
- 3) What was the first coin to use "In God we Trust?"
  - a) 1 cent
  - b) 2 cent
  - c) 3 cent
  
- 4) What war prompted the change of the National Motto?
  - a) Civil War
  - b) World War II
  - c) Cold War
  
- 5) Which President signed the resolution in 1956, declaring the change of the National Motto?
  - a) Dwight D. Eisenhower
  - b) Thomas Jefferson
  - c) Harry Truman