

# The Pledge of Allegiance

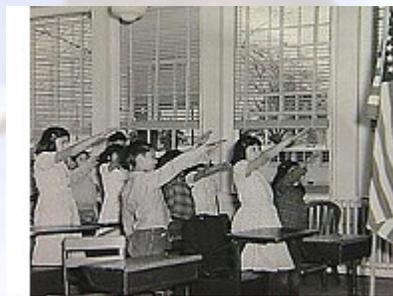


On September 8, 1892 a Boston-based youth magazine "*The Youth's Companion*" published a 22-word recitation for school children to use during planned activities the following month to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America. Under the title "**The Pledge to the Flag**", the composition was the earliest version of what we now know as the PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.



Students swearing the Pledge on Flag Day in 1899

The October 12, 1892 Columbus Day celebration of the 400th Anniversary of the discovery of America was planned for years in advance, and anticipated much as modern Americans look forward to and plan for the advent of a new century. The United States had recovered from most of the effects of its Civil War that began 30 years earlier, and people from around the world were flocking to the "Land of Opportunity". The previous year almost a half million immigrants had entered the United States through the Barge Office in Battery Park, New York and on New Years day of 1892 the new Federal Bureau of Receiving's station at Ellis Island had opened.



Students pledging to the flag with the Bells my salute.

Two men interested in both education and planned Columbus Day celebrations around our Nation's 44 states were *Francis Bellamy* and *James Upham*. To this day it is still unknown which of the two men actually authored the words that were to become the Pledge of Allegiance. It was published anonymously and not copyrighted. *James Upham* was an employee of the Boston publishing firm that produced "The Youth's Companion" in which it first appeared. *Francis Bellamy* was an educator who served as chairman of the National committee of educators and civic leaders who were planning the Columbus Day activities. *What we do know for certain is that the words first appeared in the September 8, 1892 issue of "The Youth's Companion", and a month later more than 12 million school children recited the words for the first time in schools across the nation.* Our Pledge of Allegiance was born, but like anything new, it took many years to "reach maturity", and underwent several changes along the way. **That first Pledge of Allegiance read:**

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

October 11, 1892

After the Columbus Day celebration the Pledge to the Flag became a popular daily routine in America's public schools, but gained little attention elsewhere for almost 25 years. Finally, on Flag Day - **June 14, 1923**, the Pledge received major attention from adults who had gathered for the [first National Flag Conference in Washington, D.C.](#) Here their Conference agenda took note of the wording in the Pledge. There was concern that, with the number of immigrants now living in the United States, there might be some confusion when the words "My Flag" were recited. To correct this **the pledge was altered 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.**

June 14, 1923

**The following year the wording was changed again to read:**

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

June 14, 1924

The Pledge of Allegiance continued to be recited daily by children in schools across America, and gained heightened popularity among adults during the patriotic fervor created by World War II. **It still was an "unofficial" pledge until June 22, 1942 when the United States Congress included the Pledge to the Flag in the United States Flag Code (Title 36).** This was the first Official sanction given to the words that had been recited each day by children for almost fifty years. *One*

year after receiving this official sanction, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that school children could **not be forced** to recite the Pledge as part of their daily routine.

The last change in the Pledge of Allegiance occurred on **June 14 (Flag Day), 1954** when President Dwight D. Eisenhower approved adding the words "**under God**". As he authorized this change he said:

*"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."*

This was the last change made to the Pledge of Allegiance. The 23 words that had been initially penned for a Columbus Day celebration now comprised a Thirty-one profession of loyalty and devotion to not only a flag, but to a way of life....the American ideal. **Those words now read:**

**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.**

June 14, 1954

**Recap of Official version changes** (changes in *bold italics*)

**1892 First published/created** "I pledge allegiance to my flag and the republic for which it stands: one nation indivisible with liberty and justice for all."

**1892 to 1923** "I pledge allegiance to my flag and **to** the republic for which it stands: one nation indivisible with liberty and justice for all."

**1923 to 1924** "I pledge allegiance to **the** flag **of the United States** and to the republic for which it stands: one nation indivisible with liberty and justice for all."

**June 22, 1942 Became official** when the United States Congress included the Pledge to the Flag in the **United States Flag Code (Title 36)**.

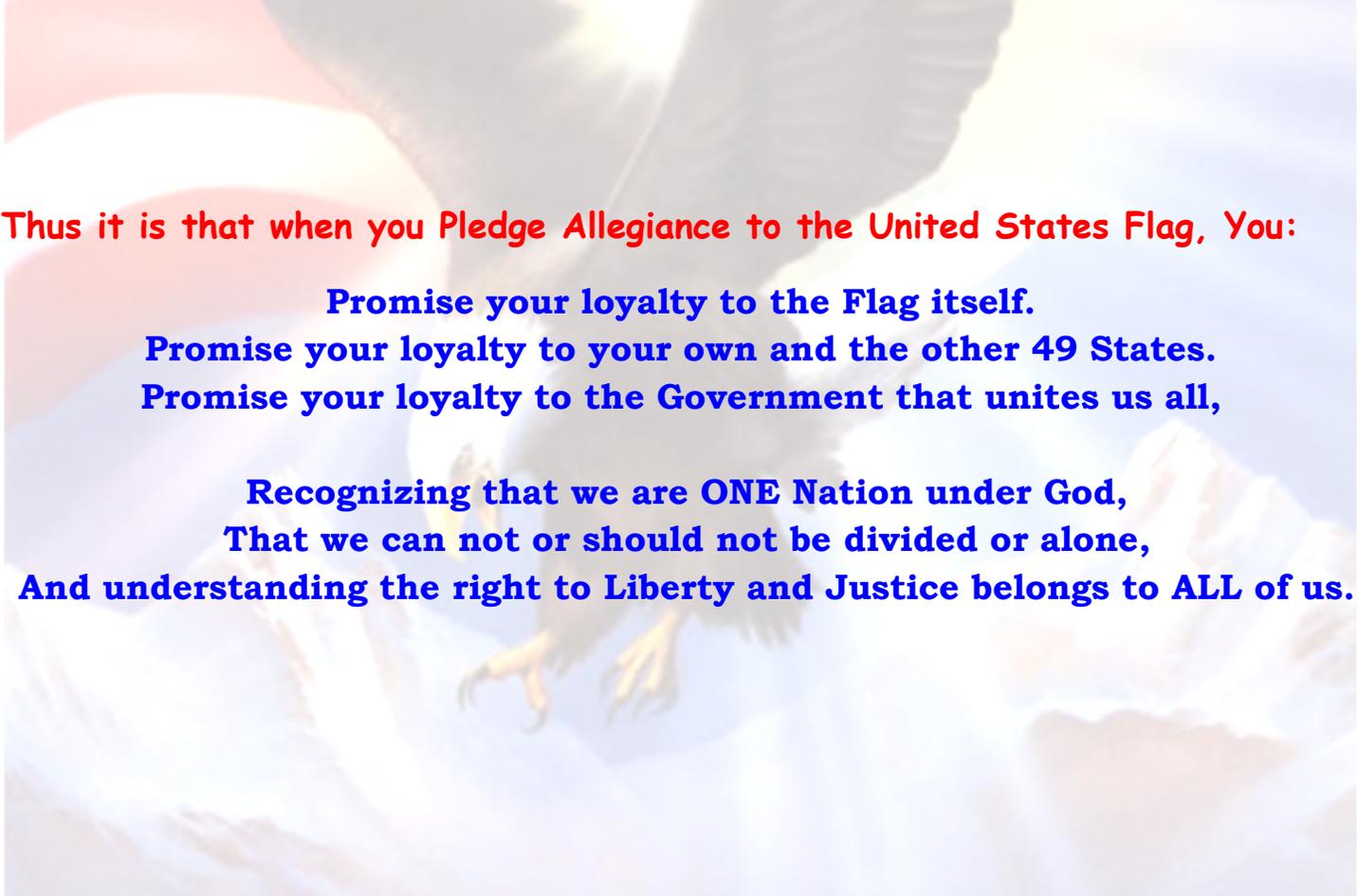
**1924 to 1954** "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States **of America**, and to the republic for which it stands; one nation indivisible with liberty and justice for all."

**1954 to Present** "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."

In 1892, 1923, 1924 and 1954 the American people demonstrated enough concern about the actual words in the Pledge to make some necessary changes. Today there may be a tendency among many Americans to recite "by rote" with little thought for the words themselves. Let's examine these 31 words a little more thoroughly.

<b>I Pledge Allegiance</b>	I Promise to be faithful and true (Promise my loyalty)
<b>to the flag</b>	to the emblem that stands for and represents
<b>of the United States</b>	all 50 states, each of them individual, and individually represented on the flag
<b>of America</b>	yet formed into a UNION of one Nation.

<b>and to the Republic</b>	And I also pledge my loyalty to the Government that is itself a Republic, a form of government where the PEOPLE are sovereign,
<b>for which it stands,</b>	this government also being represented by the Flag to which I promise loyalty.
<b>one Nation under God,</b>	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)
<b>Indivisible,</b>	and can not be separated. (This part of the original version of the pledge was written just 30 years after the beginning of the Civil War and demonstrates the unity sought in the years after that divisive period in our history)
<b>with Liberty</b>	The people of this Nation being afforded the freedom to pursue "life, liberty, and happiness",
<b>and Justice</b>	And each person entitled to be treated justly, fairly, and according to proper law and principle,
<b>for All.</b>	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.



**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.**



**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**

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# American's Creed

America's involvement in World War I was a difficult and divisive issue for our Nation. President Wilson had struggled for three years since the outbreak of hostilities in August, 1914 to maintain a position of American neutrality towards the European conflict. This effort to distance our Nation from European affairs was disturbed on May 7, 1915 when a German U-boat sank the unarmed British liner Lusitania killing more than 1,000 people including 128 Americans.

By 1917 it was becoming increasingly apparent that American neutrality could no longer be maintained. President Wilson went before Congress to request a Declaration of War with these words:

*"The world must be made safe for democracy. It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, the most terrible of wars. But the right is more precious than the peace, and we shall fight for the things that we have always carried nearest our hearts...for democracy...for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free."*

President Wilson's view of the United States as the stalwart of world democracy wasn't shared by everyone, however. Six of the 96 U.S. Senators voted against the declaration of war. The House of Representatives passed the resolution April 6, 1917, but only after 13 hours of emotional and heated debate. Forty-nine Congressmen and the only Congresswoman (Helen Rankin of Montana), voted against the declaration.

By mid-summer General John J. Pershing's American Expeditionary Force was landing in Europe. But even as Colonel Charles E. Stanton stood before the tomb of Revolutionary War hero Marquis de Lafayette's tomb in France to proclaim, "Lafayette, we are here"; trouble was brewing at home. Congress' new program of conscription under the Selective Service Act was mandating registration for military service by every American man between the ages of 21 and 30. Not since the Civil War had an issue arisen to so divide our Country.

While George M. Cohan wrote patriotic songs like "*Over There*" (actually penned on April 6, the same day Congress finally passed the Declaration of War), other citizens began to protest American involvement in "Europe's troubles" and the forced recruitment of soldiers under the Selective Service Act. By the summer of 1918 the war in Europe had forced the Government to take control of industry, railroads, and food and fuel production. Taxes were raised to fund the war, postal rates went up, and censorship of some mail was being officially conducted. In May Congress passed the Sedition Act which allowed war and draft protesters to be jailed. More than 2,000 Americans were already behind bars for interfering with the draft, including one former United States Congressman (Victor Berger of Wisconsin).

In the midst of all this domestic turmoil and dissension, a Nation-wide essay contest was held to develop an American's Creed. The winning entry was submitted by William Tyler Page of Friendship Heights, Maryland. Mr. Page was a descendent of President John Tyler and former Congressman John Page who served in the House of Representatives from 1789-1797. William Tyler Page himself had also served in Congress - - as a Congressional Page in 1881. His winning essay established the American's Creed with the following words:

*I believe in the United States of America as a Government of the People, by the People, for the People; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; A democracy in a republic, a sovereign Nation of many Sovereign States; a perfect Union, one and inseparable; established upon those principles of Freedom, Equality, Justice, and Humanity for which American Patriots sacrificed their Lives and Fortunes.*

*I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to Love it; to Support its Constitution; to obey its laws; to Respect its Flag; and to defend it against all enemies.*

The American's Creed defines what it means to be American, both the need for FAITH in who and what we are as a Nation, and the RESPONSIBILITY we all have to love and respect our Nation and its Flag. Its message is appropriate for each generation of Americans, but becomes even more meaningful when we understand the historical context of its origin...written during a time of conflict and turmoil at home and abroad.



# **The American's Creed**

**I believe in the United States of America  
as a Government of the People,  
By the People,  
For the People;  
Whose just powers are derived  
from the Consent of the Governed;  
A Democracy in a Republic  
A Sovereign Nation of Many Sovereign States;  
A Perfect Union,  
One and Inseparable;  
Established upon those Principles of Freedom,  
Equality,  
Justice,  
and Humanity  
For which American Patriots  
Sacrificed their lives and Fortunes.**

**I Therefore  
Believe it is my duty to my Country  
To Love It;  
To Support its Constitution;  
To Obey its Laws;  
To Respect its Flag;  
And to Defend it against all enemies.**