

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 17, 1985

TO: JOHN ROBERTS, Counsel's Office

FROM: *Anita*
Anita Bevacqua, Presidential
Messages x2941

RE: Message for Kentucky Public Schools

Could you please review this incoming request and advise if this is something we can do. There is no record in Files on the University or anything to the Kentucky public school system. The President's position concerning this issue is clear and this group is certainly aware of it, but we would like to be sure that a message to them is approved by your office.

Thank you for your help.

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PR014-08THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 24, 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR ANITA BEVACQUA
PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGESFROM: JOHN G. ROBERTS *JGR*
ASSOCIATE COUNSEL TO THE PRESIDENTSUBJECT: Message for Kentucky Public Schools

You have asked for our views on a response to Sam Peavey, who has requested that the President support a resolution to be submitted to the Kentucky legislature. The resolution would require the placement in Kentucky public schools of plaques containing the National Motto ("In God We Trust") and the Preamble to the Kentucky Constitution ("We, the people of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, are grateful to Almighty God for the civil, religious, and political liberties we enjoy").

It would be inappropriate for the President to interfere in the consideration of this resolution by the Kentucky legislature by sending a message of support. Further, the resolution raises First Amendment establishment clause concerns, cf. Stone v. Graham, 449 U.S. 39 (1980), and the President should not gratuitously opine on the constitutionality of this specific resolution. I have sent the attached letter to Mr. Peavey, explaining our inability to provide the message he requested.

Attachment

Department of Secondary Education
 [REDACTED]
 Education
 of Louisville
 Kentucky 402
 6591

320917 *uu*

UNIVERSITY of LOUISVILLE

March 1, 1985

President Ronald Reagan
 The White House
 Washington, D.C.

no record in CF

Dear President Reagan:

Herewith are a duplicate and an update on a letter sent you some weeks ago. It deals with a timely and significant effort to restore public confidence in our public schools. It is well known throughout the nation that you share that concern with us. We are asking that you contribute a word of support for a resolution to come before the next session of the Kentucky legislature. It concerns the need you have often expressed to restore a proper recognition and reverence for God in public schools. A supporting word from you could well insure this historic breakthrough.

The enclosed material describes a simple resolution by the legislature to require that a permanent plaque shall be posted in every public school in Kentucky with the inscription of our national motto, "In God We Trust", together with the preamble of the Kentucky Constitution, "We, the people of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, are grateful to Almighty God for the civil, religious and political liberties we enjoy." We believe such a plaque offers a needed recognition and affirmation of the foundation of faith on which our nation, our states and our schools were established. We have been proud to hear you speak to that point a number of times.

Here are two statements of support from two former governors of Kentucky:

"Our forefathers never intended for our public schools to be Godless. I support any effort to return the teaching of moral values through recognition of God as the Almighty Being. Thus, it is with great enthusiasm that I support the effort to display the preamble of the Kentucky Constitution in the public schools of Kentucky."
 - Former Kentucky Governor Julian Carroll

"I have regretted, more than I can say, that the Supreme Court and others have been foolish enough to contribute to the lack of faith in Almighty God. I would hope that someday we could overcome our foolish ways. You can depend upon my full support in trying to bring about a new feeling in the country, which will restore the name of God Almighty to the hearts and minds of the youth of the Commonwealth."
 - Former Kentucky Governor Albert B. Chandler

I know you understand how much a brief statement from you could aid this effort to restore full meaning and purpose in our children's education in the state and nation. Your many friends in Kentucky will be especially grateful.

Respectfully yours,

Sam B. Peavey
 Sam B. Peavey, Ed.D.
 Professor Emeritus
 Youth Education

SBP:cp

Department of Secondary

School of Education
of Louisville
Kentucky 40292
-6591

UNIVERSITY of LOUISVILLE

DUPLICATE OF MY
PREVIOUS LETTER

President Ronald Reagan
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Reagan:

May I request your response and counsel on a matter which I know is of serious interest to you? The decline in public faith in public schools deeply concerns most Kentuckians. Some heartening efforts to restore that faith are underway. The enclosed material deals with a most promising undertaking toward that end.

As a professor in the School of Education of the University of Louisville I worked closely with public schools and public school personnel for many years. However, in recent years, prior to retirement, I served my University as its liaison with the growing number of private and church related schools in Kentucky. Working with those many parents who had recently removed their children from public schools offered important insights into the crisis in public education.

Many factors may influence parents' choices of schooling for their children. However, one mounting concern is troubling parents today. They see an alarming loss of commitment to basic moral and spiritual values in public education. They view that loss of traditional values as the root cause of a general decline in manners, morals, motivation and morale in public schools. Certainly, any serious attempt to restore parents' faith in their schools and to improve education must recognize and respond to that situation.

President Reagan observes that "God has been expelled from school." Sadly we have tolerated conditions that have given that impression to many. If America's God has been expelled from America's schools, those schools are no longer American. It is time for firm, official action to reinstate God in good standing in every public school in Kentucky.

Concerned citizens are asking their legislature to mandate the installation of a permanent plaque in a prominent place in every public school with the inscription of our national motto, "In God We Trust", together with the preamble to the Kentucky Constitution. That plaque and the flag over the school will remind children daily of what their nation and their nation's schools stand for in these troubled times.

Details are enclosed. Please send your comments soon. This project is sponsored by private citizens, not the University with which I am associated.

Respectfully yours,

Sam B. Peavey
Sam B. Peavey, Ed.D.
Professor Emeritus

A. RESOLUTION TO RESTORE FAITH IN KENTUCKY'S SCHOOLS

- WHEREAS, God is clearly recognized throughout our history as the cornerstone of liberty under law (From the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights,") and
- WHEREAS, the first Congress designed our national seal with the Eye of Divine Providence as a recognition of the sustaining power of the new republic, and
- WHEREAS, Congress further reaffirmed that founding faith in establishing as our national motto, "In God We Trust", an official credo that has appeared on our currency for well over a century, and
- WHEREAS, all U.S. presidents have recognized God as the source of our nation's greatness and blessings (From Jefferson: "God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that those liberties are the gift of God?" And from Eisenhower: "Without God, there would be no American Way of Life.") and
- WHEREAS, the U.S. Supreme Court has stated, "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being" (Zorach 1952), and
- WHEREAS, Kentucky's Constitution, like that of other states, opens with thanks to God, "We, the people of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, (are) grateful to Almighty God for the civil, religious and political liberties we enjoy," and
- WHEREAS, our schools must instill in each new generation an understanding of the historic values upon which our nation was founded and a comprehension of the global significance of those commitments (From President Kennedy: "... the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe, the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God."), and
- WHEREAS, there is tragic, widespread confusion concerning the legal status of spiritual values in education which must be resolved (From President Reagan: "...the relentless drive to eliminate God from our schools can and should be stopped." and
- WHEREAS, there are mounting concerns among school patrons as they witness what appears to be an abandonment of basic moral and spiritual values in their schools today (Note: Over 1000 new church related schools have been established every year during the past decade by former patrons of public schools.) and
- WHEREAS, civil and educational authorities must act to restore faith in Kentucky's schools by assuring concerned citizens that our schools can and will present our founding faith (In God We Trust) in a responsible and respectful manner.
- THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT EACH PUBLIC SCHOOL IN KENTUCKY SHALL BE REQUIRED TO POST IN A PROMINENT PLACE IN THE SCHOOL A PERMANENT METAL PLAQUE 18"X18" INSCRIBED

I N G O D W E T R U S T

WE, THE PEOPLE OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY,
ARE GRATEFUL TO ALMIGHTY GOD FOR THE CIVIL,
RELIGIOUS, AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES WE ENJOY.

- Kentucky Constitution

Funding and installation of the plaques shall be the responsibility of the individual school community. Kentucky Superintendent of Public Instruction, Alice McDonald, advises, "... it is my opinion and the opinion of my legal staff that we see no difficulty with the course of action you propose." The words of the plaque are simply historic statements of civil reverence from secular history which neither advance nor inhibit religion as such.