

LINDA WHITE

**PERSONAL TESTIMONY**

Colorado State Senate Finance Committee

February 7, 2023

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Finance Committee. I am writing this in strong support of Senate Bill 23-025 that would create a special, "In God We Trust" license plate for Colorado.

My husband and I have been residents of Colorado for 40 years. We grew up in a small town in South Dakota where our belief in God, the importance of family and the love of our country was formed. We raised our 2 children with those same values which have been passed on to our 8 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren all of whom live in CO.

My Dad was a WWII veteran, my husband served in the National Guard and our son is a veteran of the Gulf War. I am honored to have been involved with the Rocky Mountain Northern Colorado Honor Flight and escorted Veterans to Washington DC to visit the memorials that honor their service to our country.

Currently, none of the 133 special license plates available to Coloradans gives us the opportunity to depict our love of God and country. If we wanted a Greyhound Lovers, or a Pueblo Chile, or a Support the Horse, Share the Road, Support the Pollinators or Carbon Fund license I could order on today. People who support, "In God we Trust" deserve to have our values represented. Just as I would not buy any of the listed special plates those who oppose an "In God We Trust" license do not have to purchase this special plate.

"In God We Trust" is prominently displayed in both United States House and Senate Chambers. I urge you to pass SD23-025 so I and many others can proudly display a CO "In God We Trust" license on our vehicles.

Respectfully,

Linda White, Hilltop Conservative Club, Chair

22931 E Del Norte Circle

Aurora CO

John P. Priecko  
**PERSONAL TESTIMONY**  
For the Colorado State Senate Finance Committee  
(February 7, 2023)

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, I am John Priecko, a Colorado Resident, registered vehicle owner, and strong advocate for Senate Bill SB23-025 creating a Special *"In God We Trust"* License Plate for Colorado. I am honored to support this worthy endeavor.

I am a grateful and proud Military veteran who served 25 years as a Pilot in the United States Air Force. Features of my career include a tour of duty on the Joint Staff in the Pentagon as the Chief of Strategic Operations and Training. Another highlight was serving as a B-1 Squadron Commander and Instructor Pilot.

The most rewarding efforts after my Military career, are as the Vice President, Global Trade Compliance, with J.P. Morgan Chase and Company. Additionally, and currently, I am the President and Managing Partner of Trade Compliance Solutions, a Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business.

In the way of background related to this Legislation, my wife Sandy and I moved here from Northern Virginia in July 2019, to be closer to our two adult sons. When we registered our vehicle, we discovered Colorado did not have an *"In God We Trust"* or similar license plate as we did in Virginia and 23 other states.

In June of 2020, I attended an Independence Institute Leadership Conference in Denver and met Kurt Huffman from State Representative Mark Baisley's Office. A lunch time discussion with Kurt that day is the catalyst for this initiative. The final design for this Special License Plate represents what we see as a professionally polished and visually appealing end-product. We believe our design is the best out there.

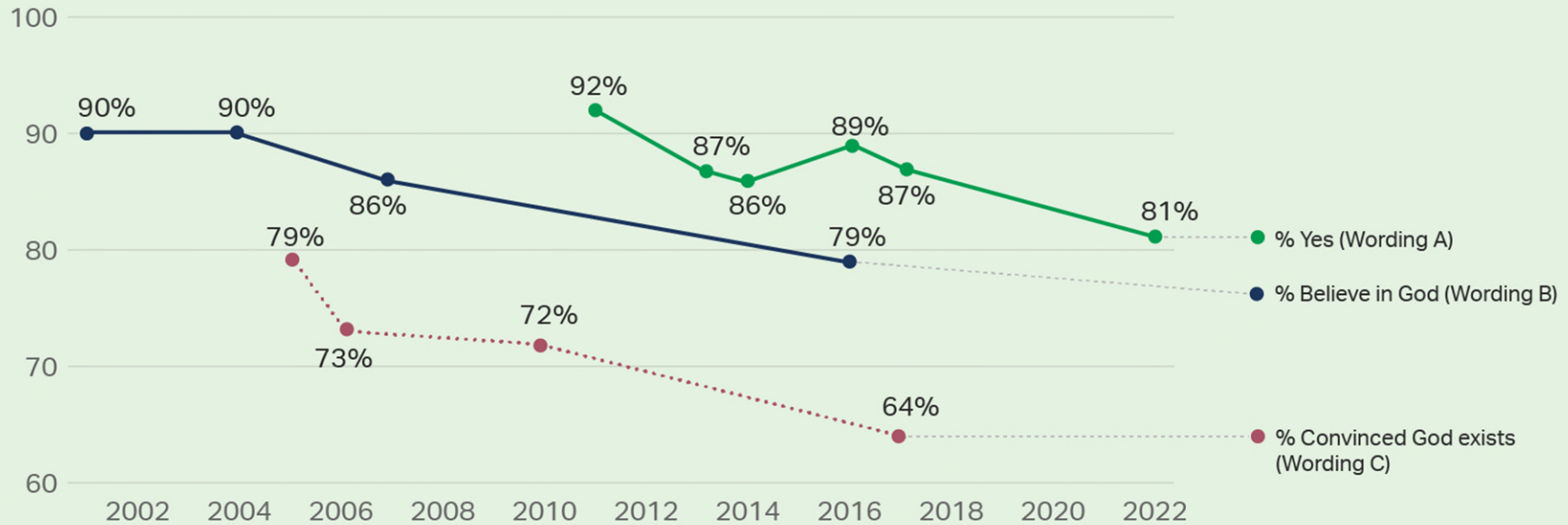
*"In God We Trust"* is the Official National Motto of the United States. It appears on our paper money, coins, in courtrooms, and on government and state office buildings across America. It is appropriate, fitting, and timely that Colorado creates an *"In God We Trust"* Special License Plate. We are passionate about our Country, our Flag, our National Motto, and this important effort.

My family and I urge passage of SB23-025. Further, colleagues, coworkers, friends, fellow veterans, and neighbors also support this Bill. Likewise, those same people look forward to purchasing and displaying the plate as soon as it can be purchased. Many have said they would buy it now if it was available.

Respectfully Submitted,

John P. Priecko,  
In God We Trust Program Director  
Colonel USAF (Retired)  
Life Member: Air Force Association & Disabled American Veterans  
22683 East Glidden Drive, Aurora, Colorado 80016-7388  
jpriecko@comcast.net, 703-895-1110

# What Percentage of Americans Believe in God?



Question wordings:

**A:** Do you believe in God?

**B:** For each of the items I'm going to read you, please tell me whether it is something you believe in, something you're not sure about, or something you don't believe in. What about God?

**C:** Which comes closest to describing you: you are convinced that God exists; you think God probably exists, but you have a little doubt; you think God probably exists, but you have a lot of doubt; you think God probably does not exist, but you are not sure; or, you are convinced that God does not exist?

Major General (ret) Joe Arbuckle U.S. Army  
**PERSONAL TESTIMONY**  
Before the Colorado Senate Finance Committee  
(7 February, 2023)

Senators of the Senate Transportation & Energy Committee, I am a Colorado Resident and strong advocate for Senate Bill 23-025 that creates a Special "*In God We Trust*" License Plate for Colorado.

Having attended junior high and high school at Littleton, then on to Western State College at Gunnison, where I graduated in 1968, I consider myself to be a Colorado resident. The draft was looming in 1968 which caused me to enter the Army. After retiring from the Army in 2000, my wife and I lived near Westcliffe for 16 years, moving to El Paso County in 2016.

54 years ago I swore to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic...so help me God". As an infantryman, I fought in Vietnam upholding that sacred oath, along with millions of other loyal patriots. When swearing that oath to the Constitution, we recognize all of our Rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights and Constitution come from our "Creator". Rights are not given to us by man, they come to all people from God and in God we trust.

Recognizing this, I am dismayed as to why allowing citizens to voluntarily put on their license plates "In God We Trust" is even being discussed. There must be a small minority, who for some reason, do not want to see the word "God". Votes in state and national legislative bodies like yours are for the most part governed by a majority vote. So why is it that a minority of vocal activists are able to push an agenda against God when the majority of citizens recognize the existence of God even if they do not practice organized religion? Those who do not want to see the word "God" do not have to look at the plates and they certainly should not deny the 1st Amendment Right of freedom of religion and speech to those who do want to put God on their plates.

Additional considerations:

- o In God We Trust is our National Motto. So why can our National Motto not be on license plates?
- o In God We Trust is on forms of our national currency which everyone sees, so why can it not be on license plates?
- o Inside the U.S. supreme court is Moses holding tablets of the 10 commandments, coming from God.
- o The U.S. House of Representatives has In "God We Trust" inside the chambers.

This is not a church vs state issue. Our Constitution prohibits the establishment of a national religion like the Church of England in the 1700s. This issue has nothing to do with a national religion. "God" is a universal term applied to the "Creator" and is used by many religions. The term "God" may be objectionable to atheists but they are a minority and must not dictate majority decisions. As said before, anyone objecting to "In God We Trust" on a license plate does not have to look at it. Just like we do not have to look at the dozens of other designer license plates in Colorado which are personal preferences.

I close by saying I do not understand why this is an issue; the decision merits are obvious.



Joe Arbuckle  
Major General  
U.S. Army (retired)

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Joe Arbuckle  
Major General  
U.S. Army (retired)



Submission of Written Testimony to the Finance Committee Hearing Regarding SB 23-025, Bear Owen to: committees.lcs.ga@coleg.gov 02/05/2023 08:50 PM

The following is my written testimony to the Colorado Senate Finance Committee on the occasion of its hearing regarding proposed SB 23-025, the "In God We Trust Special license Plate Bill":

Ladies and Gentlemen of the committee, my name is Jerry D. Owen, I reside at 16025 Quandary Loop, Broomfield, CO 80023. I am a retired commercial airline pilot of twenty years continuous service, retired military fighter-attack-reconnaissance pilot with thirty two years of combined service in the United States Marine Corps, Air National Guard, and United States Air Force. I have two masters of arts degrees, one in Management and Human Relations from Webster University, and one in National Defense Policy and Strategic Studies from the United States Naval War College. I taught history as an associate professor of Naval Science at the University of Colorado for two and a half years. I am also a retired Colorado Licensed Real Estate Broker with twenty five years of full-time real estate sales and brokerage experience. I am 77 years old, and still charging along in a busy retirement by performing volunteer work for a number of veterans' groups, charitable foundations, and civic organizations.

I write to the committee today to urge the passage of Senate Bill 23-025 which would give Colorado's drivers the option of purchasing license plates displaying the flags of the United States and the State of Colorado, and the motto, "In God We Trust". The rationale for advocating the bill's passage is as follows: In the Declaration of Independence, penned by Thomas Jefferson in 1775 it clearly states that we, the American People, are "...endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights" which include "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness". Jefferson, not a religious man per se, but a Deist, nevertheless believed as did a unanimous membership of the First Continental Congress that those precious rights, later codified in the US Constitution of 1789, were recognized by a nearly unanimous majority of delegates to our country's Constitutional Convention to have come from their Creator God, and not from the governments of men. The United States for "twelve score and seven years" has adorned our currency and public buildings with a trinity of our national mottoes, "Liberty", "E Pluribus Unum" (out of many, one), and, I would argue, most importantly, "In God We Trust". These comprise the three-legged plinth of ideals upon which our country has stood through the potentially fatal perils which have faced the Republic. As a commissioned US military officer I took a solemn oath "to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic...." sealing that life and death promise with "So help me God".

So, in recognition of the foregoing, I offer my most ardent support for this bill, which would create the option of an "In God We Trust" license plate, because there are many of us Coloradans who still believe in the founding principles upon which our precious freedoms as Americans are derived, and would like to promote that belief on the license plates adorning our motor vehicles. Rhetorically I raise this question for your consideration as representatives of the people of Colorado: if optional special license plates touting "pet rescue" or the "Colorado Rockies" major league baseball team are currently available to motor vehicle owners, is it really too much to ask that those of us who still believe firmly in our national motto, "In God We Trust" be offered that same option for our own

license plates that has been afforded to baseball team boosters, "Pike's Peak Hill Climb" fans, or "Greyhound Lovers"?

Respectfully Submitted,

Jerry D. "Bear" Owen, LtCol (Ret)



**Kim Monson**  
**PERSONAL TESTIMONY**  
**Colorado State Senate Finance Committee**  
**(February 7, 2023)**  
**Vote Yes: SB23-025**  
**In God We Trust License Plate**

When America was fighting for our Independence from Great Britain, there were very dark days. We have seen the painting of General George Washington praying as he kneels by his horse. As the Continental Army and General George Washington were camped at Valley Forge, the winter was brutal for the Patriots. Prayeratvalleyforge.com tells the testimony of Isaac Potts.

*This story is well documented in the historical records. Isaac Potts, 26 years old, was a resident of Valley Forge, and as a Quaker was opposed to the war. He supervised the grinding of the grain which George Washington ordered the neighboring farmers to bring to his army. The fullest account of Potts' testimony is in the "Diary and Remembrances" of Rev. Nathaniel Randolph Snowden, a Presbyterian minister and a Princeton graduate (Original Manuscript at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Call no. PHi.Am.1561-1568).*

*"I was riding with him (Mr. Potts) near Valley Forge, where the army lay during the war of the Revolution. Mr. Potts was a Senator in our state and a Whig. I told him I was agreeably surprised to find him a friend to his country as the Quakers were mostly Tories. He said, "It was so and I was a rank Tory once, for I never believed that America could proceed against Great Britain whose fleets and armies covered the land and ocean. But something very extraordinary converted me to the good faith. "What was that?" I inquired. "Do you see that woods, and that plain?" It was about a quarter of a mile from the place we were riding. "There," said he, "laid the army of Washington. It was a most distressing time of ye war, and all were for giving up the ship but that one good man. In that woods," pointing to a close in view, "I heard a plaintive sound, as of a man at prayer. I tied my horse to a sapling and went quietly into the woods and to my astonishment I saw the great George Washington on his knees alone, with his sword on one side and his cocked hat on the other. He was at Prayer to the God of the Armies, beseeching to interpose with his Divine aid, as it was ye Crisis and the cause of the country, of humanity, and of the world."Such a prayer I never heard from the lips of man. I left him alone praying. I went home and told my wife, 'I saw a sight and heard today what I never saw or heard before', and just related to her what I had seen and heard and observed. We never thought a man could be a soldier and a Christian, but if there is one in the world, it is Washington. We thought it was the cause of God, and America could prevail."*

From our very inception as a country, many great and everyday American's have and do put our trust in God. It is only fitting that Coloradans have the option to purchase a license plate as a testament to this trust.

Thank you for your "YES" vote on SB23-025: In God We Trust License Plate.

Sincerely,  
Kim Monson  
Host of The Kim Monson Radio Show  
Host of America's Veteran's Stories with Kim Monson



David R. Fornof  
**PERSONAL TESTIMONY**  
Before the Colorado Senate Finance Committee

Mr Chairman and Members of the State Finance Committee, I have been a resident of Colorado since 1975. I am a strong advocate for Senate Bill 23-025 that creates a Special “*In GOD We Trust*” license Plate for Colorado.

I am a proud Navy Vietnam Veteran who served two tours on the upper regions of the Mekong River where our ship was used as a resupply platform for Army, Navy, Marine, Special Forces, and SEAL missions. Our mission was to be a stationary support for housing, food, ammunition, first aid and morgue while all the time being a sitting duck at anchor. What I and others experienced there gave us a strong sense of our Lord’s presence regardless of the day’s challenges. We routinely found 1000 pound mines magnetically attached to our hull by enemy swimmers. Fortunately, the fuses all failed. Our sister ship was not as fortunate; about 386 dead or missing. Another example was a crew member on the aft gun mount who, against orders, lit a cigarette at night. He dropped the cigarette. As he bent over to pick it up three tracers flew by just missing his head.

After my separation from the Navy, I moved to Germany because of the intolerable attitudes our own citizens displayed to Vietnam veterans. While living in Germany, many of my friends had parents with concentration camp numbers tattooed on their arm. Because of these personal experiences, I learned to appreciate my Rights as a United States Citizen even more including my First Amendment right of Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Religion.

Last week during testimony before the Senate Transportation and Energy Committee I heard remarks indicating a basic lack of understanding of the First Amendment of our Constitution. I therefore quote it verbatim here:

AMENDMENT I  
(Ratified effective 01/15/1791)

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

The First Amendment states nothing about separation of Church from State. On the contrary, it explicitly restrains Government from impinging on religious beliefs, i.e. separation of State from Church. Therefore, I believe that understanding the First Amendment is more than sufficient to support a “yes” vote and move this bill to the Senate floor.

Thank you for our time...and re there any questions?

David R. Fornof retired U.S. Navy Veteran

Marie E Fornof  
**PERSONAL TESTIMONY**

For the Colorado State Senate Finance Committee  
February 7, 2023

Mr. Chairperson and Members of The Senate Finance Committee, I am Marie Fornof, a Colorado resident since 1975, Colorado home and vehicle owner and a strong advocate for Senate Bill SB23-025. This bill is asking for the creation of a special *"In God We Trust"* license plate for Colorado. I am honored to have been asked to support this very worthy endeavor.

My husband, David, is a Vietnam Veteran. He enlisted and served in the United States Navy during this war. As such, he took an oath to protect and defend the constitution of these United States. He also worked as a civilian contractor for many years for the United States Air Force while we lived in Colorado Springs. As such, he saw what sacrifices were made by those serving in our military forces. He will speak more about this during his written and oral testimony before you.

In researching the motto prior to testifying, I needed to discover how it came to be on all our coins and bills as part of the heritage of freedom we all are privileged to enjoy in this country of ours. For many, this motto is seen as arising during 1864 and our Civil War when it was placed on a few specific coins where it remained until 1932. At that time, it was retired from any of our currency until July of 1956 when legislation passed by congress and signed into law by then president, Dwight Eisenhower, required placement of the motto on all currency where it remains until this day. However, this motto originated earlier than this. The earliest written record I could discover was in the 4<sup>th</sup> stanza of the *Star Spangled Banner* as written by Francis Scott Key during the War of 1812 at the battle of Fort McHenry in 1814. For those of you who may be unfamiliar with this, here is the final half of that stanza:

*Then conquer we must, for our cause is just  
And this be our motto- "In God is our trust."  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doeth wave.  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.*

Currently, this motto can occupy the special license plates in 20 states and a similar motto that states "God bless America" is available in four more states. The main argument I have heard against this being allowed in our state is that it is against our freedom of religion as stated in our constitution. To me, this is an extremely poor argument for the following reasons:

1. Most of our nation believes in God. The 2022 Gallup poll shows that 81% of Americans still said they believed in a God. I have attached the downloaded poll for submission with this document.
2. We currently have 212 special plates you can get in the state of Colorado. It is only one of many from which the people in our state who are licensing vehicles, can choose.
3. A special plate is one we use as a statement of what is important to us. If we are, as we say, a free society then we have this right to express our belief. In fact, I will state that failure to provide the plate, infringes on my right and the right of all who believe in God to be unable to express this belief.
4. This plate does not violate another person's right not to believe in God. It is one we choose to express our belief. To me that is no different from plates that our veterans, skiers, dog lovers, etc. can obtain to display something they feel is important to them. IT IS SIMPLY A PERSONAL BELIEF for those choosing to display the plate.

The second argument that I recently heard was if we allowed this plate, then what was to prevent a group from having a special plate that said "God is dead." This argument is not rational as it never negates this right. However, it is a highly unlikely one due to current statistics cited above. If the plate is requested, it would go through the same path as this bill requires. And, if it should pass, again this is a special plate that expresses that person's belief set. It does not infringe on my beliefs.

I will close by urging for the passage of SB23-025 by the Finance Committee by urging you to remember how the revenue from this bill will aid our state. The bill states that it will cost \$50.00 to obtain the plate. Those fees will be split with \$25.00 going to the Highway fund and \$25.00 going to the General fund for Colorado. This will help our state financially. I personally look forward to being able to purchase this plate and display it on my vehicle soon.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie Fornof  
Citizen and taxpayer in Colorado since 1975.

