

House Finance

05/01/2023 Upon Adjournment

SB23-025 In God We Trust Special License Plate

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Jerry Owen  For  themselves	<p>My name is Jerry D. Owen and my nickname, acquired during a career as a US Military fighter pilot, is "Bear". I am a retired lieutenant colonel after 32 years in the uniform of our military services, both active duty and reserve. I served one tour of duty in Vietnam, completing 55 combat missions during 1972 and volunteered to serve in Desert Storm. I am also a retired Continental Airlines captain after a twenty year career with that carrier. I will be testifying in person before the committee in my capacity as a private citizen of Colorado and not as a representative of any special interest organization.</p> <p>My advocacy for passage of SB 23-025 is based upon my patriotic faith in the fundamental founding principles of our great nation which I was honored to serve for three decades, Those fundamental principles are enshrined in the Declaration of Independence which unambiguously states that the birth of our nation was based upon the natural rights granted to American citizens by our Creator including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Those declared principles and the ones defined in the US Constitution, which I swore to protect and defend, inspired the performance of my duties as a fighter and attack pilot throughout the tenure of my commission, and by which I am bound to this day. Our official national motto, "In God We Trust, adorns our currency and many other physical symbols of our national polity, underscoring our unity as a free and sovereign people.</p> <p>Our state offers a plethora of optional license plate designs for motorists to display their public interest in a wide variety of causes within he State of Colorado, but inexplicably does not include our sacred national motto. For the reasons stated above I strongly believe that Colorado motorists should also have the opportunity to publicly display their support for our national motto, "In God We Trust", and that is why I submit this humble letter of advocacy for the authorizing bill to be passed by this committee, the entire Legislature, and signed into statute by our Governor.</p>

	<p>Respectfully submitted,</p> <p>LtCol J.D. "Bear" Owen (Ret)</p>
<p>Kathleen Chandler</p> <p>For themselves</p>	<p>Kathleen Chandler</p> <p>PERSONAL TESTIMONY</p> <p>Before the Colorado House Finance Committee (May 1, 2023)</p> <p>Chairman and members of the House Finance Committee, I am Kathleen Chandler, a 4th generation Colorado native and strong believer in our common heritage. I passionately support Senate Bill 23-025 that creates a Special "In God We Trust" License Plate for Colorado. I am honored to be here and support this worthy endeavor.</p> <p>In the way of background related to this Legislation, my family strongly supports our founding Father's commitment securing the rights of the individual to worship or not. It is not the right of government to grant that permission. It is the inherent right of the individual to have freedom of conscience. To deny that American's forefathers were guided by religious freedom and their conviction that there is a God, a creator, is to deny the very words we have based our society and country on.</p> <p>With that said, I am excited to add the In God We Trust license plate as an expression of that sentiment.</p> <p>Today there are license plates for just about any free expression, from Adopt a Shelter Pet to Support Education to Wildlife Sporting. Yet there is no license plate for the support of God, the creator, Who our very country acknowledges in our founding documents? It is time. It is time to add this as a choice. This is a free expression of one's values. No one is forcing anyone to purchase this plate, but to have it available.</p> <p>"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 in Colorado. It is appropriate, fitting, and timely that Colorado creates an "In God We Trust" Special License Plate. There are many choices for license plates, and this should be one of them.</p> <p>My family and I urge passage of SB23-025 as do many other Coloradans. We all look forward to purchasing and displaying the plate as soon as it is</p>

	<p>available. All we are asking for is the choice afforded many others that choose to express their values on their cars through the support the diverse license plates available today.</p> <p>Respectfully Submitted,</p> <p>Kathleen Chandler 21415 E Mansfield Dr. Aurora, CO 80013</p>
<p>Linda White For themselves</p>	<p>LINDA WHITE</p> <p>PERSONAL TESTIMONY</p> <p>Colorado State House of Representatives Finance Committee</p> <p>May 1, 2023</p> <p>Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Finance Committee, I am writing this in enthusiastic and strong support of Senate Bill 23-025 that creates a Special "In God We Trust" License Plate for Colorado.</p> <p>My husband and I have been residents of Colorado for 40 years. We grew-up in a small South Dakota town where our belief in God, the importance of family, and love of our Country and Flag were formed. We raised two children with those same fundamental values which have been passed on to our eight grandchildren and two great grandchildren, all of whom live in Colorado.</p> <p>My Dad was a World War II Veteran, my husband served in the National Guard, and our son is a Veteran of the Gulf War. We are proud of that heritage. Additionally, I am honored to have been involved with the Rocky Mountain Northern Colorado Honor Flight and escorted Veterans to Washington D.C. to visit the memorials that honor their service to our Country.</p> <p>Currently, none of the almost 150 Special License Plates in five different categories, available to Colorado residents, gives us the opportunity to adequately depict our love of God and Country. If we wanted a Greyhound Lovers, Pueblo Chile, a Support the Horse, Share the Road, Support the Pollinators, or Carbon Fund license plate, we could order and buy one now. That's all we ask for with the "In God We Trust" license plate.</p>

	<p>American Citizens and Colorado Residents who believe in and support our National Motto “In God We Trust,” deserve to have our values represented in a fair and unbiased way. Just as I would not buy any of the other listed Special License Plates, those who oppose an “In God We Trust” plate, do not have to purchase it. It’s an option and freedom of choice issue.</p> <p>“In God We Trust” is prominently displayed in both the Unites States House of Representatives and Senate Chambers, as well as, in and on the United States Supreme Court Building, and numerous other local, state, and federal facilities across the United States. I urge you to pass SB23-025; so, I and many others can proudly display the Colorado “In God We Trust” Special License Plates on our vehicles.</p> <p>Respectfully,</p> <p>Linda White</p> <p>Hilltop Conservative Club Chair</p> <p>22931 East Del Norte Circle</p> <p>Aurora, Colorado 80016</p>
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Major General Joe Arbuckle, U.S. Army (retired)  
**PERSONAL TESTIMONY**  
For the Colorado State House Finance Committee  
(Monday 1 May, 2023)

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Finance Committee, I am a Colorado Resident and strong advocate for Senate Bill SB23-025 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)

In support of SB23-025 "In God We Trust" special Colorado *license* plate.

As a Navy veteran of the Viet Nam War, I have lived in and paid taxes to the State of Colorado since I moved here in 1975. In the spirit of our Founding Fathers who repeatedly stated that our legislative representatives are an extension of the Peoples' wills and desires, I wish to offer the following testimony pertaining to the importance of the passage of this bill. Unfortunately, I am currently located on the East Coast and cannot attend your hearing.

While serving in the Navy, our ship squadron was used as strategic support platforms for hundreds of sorties by multiple branches of our armed services. We stayed at anchor near the infamous point on the Mekong River called Snoop's Nose where incoming rockets rained around us almost nightly and sniper fire by day. We kept our sanity through our faith in God. Those who has no faith panicked. As an example of one such incident I relay the following conversation I had with an army soldier during movie call on a particular eventful night of raining rockets. "Hey! Where do you go? Where do you hide? We're under attack!" the army lad asked in a panic-stricken voice. I asked him to be quiet so others could watch the movie in peace. "But what if we get hit?" he continued.

I told him what all the crew knew, "If you heard it, you're alive. If you didn't don't worry about it" Our faith in God allowed us the discipline necessary to go about our various missions without casualties or panic. People who "did their own thing" when they thought no one was looking paid severely for their transgressions. Such an example was a young sailor on night stern watch on the secluded gun mount. Having a tobacco addiction and thinking no one could see his actions, he lit a cigarette. Fortunately for him, he dropped the cigarette. As he bent down to pick it up, three tracer rounds flew through the air where his head should have been. That was a minimum of at least seven bullets. Instantly he knew he was personally responsible for his own actions and the resulting consequences. The dawning of that revelation kept him in a basket case state for the next 16 hours. Totally unfit for duty.

Our Republic was founded on religious principals as outlined in the First Amendment which simply states in part that religion should control the morals and ethics of our elected officials but the government is barred from infringing on religious beliefs. Clearly this indicates that an argument of religious separation of church and state does not hold water. Currently, at least 24 other states agree with this opinion. Why not Colorado? This especially true when the Colorado government has already approved 216 special interest plates. Such plates will only return half of the revenues the new vanity plate "In God We Trust" plate will because no special interest group is laying claim to the funds available by law generated by the sale of the plate. Additionally, our inmates in Canyon City enjoy an incentive program through the manufacture of license plates. The addition of this new vanity plate will give them more variety to work with increasing the desire of other inmates to imitate their good behavior to become eligible to work in this area of the prison. This gives these inmates skills and references for employment after their sentence is served.

For me, failure to pass this simple request invalidates my Constitutional ability to publicly express my religious beliefs.

Respectfully,  
David R. Fornof

**Pastor Johnny Jenkins**  
**Solid Rock Missionary Baptist Church**  
**Denver Colorado**  
**Personal Testimony**

**Members of the House Finance Committee. I have been a Resident of the great state since 1969. I come before you as an advocate for Senate Bill 23-025 which is being discussed today. "IN God WE Trust" License Plate for Colorado.**

**In 1967 I join the U.S. Army severed in the Viet Nam war as an APC driver and track commander with the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, after being discharged from the Army in 1969 I decided not to return to my home state of Texas and took up residence in Colorado. I served this country with pride just like my father, Uncles who served in World War 2, and all my brothers served in the Military also. As you can see my family is a long list of Veterans who swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States.**

**This License Plate is of utmost important to a lot of people who I am associated with in church circles and out of church circles. In God we Trust is our National Mott. Allow it to be on license plates. In God we Trust is on our money allow it on license plates. The U.S House of Representatives has "In God We Trust" inside the chambers why can't Colorado put it on license plates?**

**In 2003 USA Today, CNN, and Gallup said that 90% of Americans support the inscription "In God we Trust" on U.S coins and in 2019 student poll by College Pulse 53% supported its inclusion in currency. My question is this. The number show there is a majority who in this country support it on money why would there not be support for Senate Bill 23-025.? I urge you with the utmost respect to move forward on this bill. To not move forward would to a disserve to those who fought and died for the ideas of this nation and what it stood for.**

**Pastor Johnny Jenkins**



# Holly Jo Riecks

## Personal Testimony

For the Colorado State House of Representatives Finance Committee  
(Monday, May 1, 2023)

Chairman and Members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me to voice my support of Senate Bill 23-025. My name is Holly Riecks and I am currently a High School Spanish teacher in Douglas County. I have held a professional teaching license with the Colorado Department of Education for 30 years. In addition, I am a 3rd generation Colorado native who is proud to call Colorado my home both now and forevermore. I am strongly in favor of passing Senate Bill 23-025.

As a teacher, everyday I witness the next generation searching and discovering who they are and what they believe. I am a strong proponent for them having all the facts and being able to make their own social, political and religious choices. As Americans and Coloradans, these young adults are the next generation of Colorado drivers. They too should have the option, along with all other Colorado residents, to express their identity and select an "In God We Trust" license plate from the many other specialty plates that are available.

While discussing this Bill with my colleagues in education, many have been enthusiastically supporting it. They have reiterated that they will be buying this plate when it comes out, as will I.

It gives me great pleasure to think that when this Bill is passed, I can report to my students and colleagues that the House Finance Committee has heard and acted on their behalf.

Respectfully,

Holly Jo Riecks  
Colorado Native  
High School Spanish Teacher

John P. Priecko  
**PERSONAL TESTIMONY**

For the Colorado State House of Representatives Finance Committee  
(Monday, May 1, 2023)

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House 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 a Leadership Conference 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 and the only one with the In God We Trust branding.

*"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.

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 Special License Plate Program Director  
Colonel USAF (Retired)  
Life Member: Air Force Association & Disabled American Veterans  
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Stephen C. Riecks

## Personal Testimony

For the Colorado State House of Representatives Finance Committee  
(Monday, May 1, 2023)

Chairman and Members of the House Finance Committee, my name is Steve Riecks. I am a corporate graphic artist and illustrator living and working in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. I have been a resident of this great state for over 50 years. I am strongly in favor of the passing of Senate Bill 23-025, which would make available to drivers in Colorado, a Special "In God We Trust" license plate!

My father served in the United States Air Force and retired as a Lt. Colonel while serving at Lowry Air Force Base in Colorado. My daughter and son-in-law are presently First Lieutenants in the United States Air Force. I personally have been blessed to travel to over 22 countries around the world. My experiences and those of my family members have reinforced my thankfulness, that Colorado residents and United States citizens have the freedom to express our beliefs... whether religious, political, or social.

I was honored to be selected to create the final license plate design that best reflects the vision and spirit for this "In God We Trust" license plate. I have a strong love for God, the United States, and Colorado. This license plate will be a great addition to the many other options available to Colorado residents. People who support "In God We Trust" deserve to have their voices included and represented. Colorado will be the 25th state to have this option. I will be proud to have it on my vehicle, as will many of my family members, friends, and associates.

In closing, there is no reason or justification to decline the passing of this bill!

Sincerely,

Steve Riecks  
STEVE RIECKS LLC  
Corporate Graphic Design and illustration  
*President and Owner*

In support of SB23-025 "In God We Trust" special plate:

As a citizen and taxpayer in Colorado since 1975, I wish to provide testimony as to the importance that this bill become law in our state. I have previously testified in person before two senate committees. However, I am currently out-of-state and unable to return.

Currently 24 states have plates that identify the role I feel should be strongly a part of both America and our state. Twenty have this on their plate and 4 others the motto "God bless America" on the plate. As we are asking for this as a special plate, I feel there is **absolutely no contraindication with the separation of state and church** as has been previously argued by those opposing the bill. This is a special plate that no one is required to buy. To me, this is no different than any of the 216 special plates already approved in Colorado. What goes on these special plates is an expression of what that person holds as important to them. It is no different than a plate saying we love dogs, we support breast cancer fights, etc.

It is true that I consider God important in my life and this comes from a Christian viewpoint. In 2022, the Gallup poll showed 81% of Americans still expressing a belief in God and over 58% of college aged their lives. The special plates are designed for personal expression not to influence others. As such, I see no reason why Colorado should not join these states in approving this plate<sup>7</sup> allowing those who wish, freedom of religion to express their values.

As part of the process of being involved with helping this bill come to fruition, I have also learned about the role that producing these and plates for ours and other states plays in providing inmates with a job skill for when they are released. I learned that our state prison system produces all the plates in Colorado and also those for many other states and even some territories in the Caribbean. The prisoners must be inmates for a minimum of two years and also have good behavior records in order to be accepted into the program. They then learn job skills that can be used in other areas such as graphics design and certain areas of manufacturing when they again are released following completion of their sentences.

Remember that we were founded for religious freedom. To me, being denied this plate invalidates this freedom. It is a special plate- not a required one. Please pass SB23-025.

Sincerely, Marie E Fornof