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SENATOR KEN PRUITT

28th District

September 15, 2005

Pledging Allegiance to the Flag: The Way it Should Be

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I was shocked and dismayed when U.S. District Judge Lawrence Karlton, a federal judge in California, ruled it unconstitutional to recite the Pledge of Allegiance because of two words: "under God."

This is not the first time this divisive issue has been in front of our courts. The individual who filed suit in California, Michael Newdow, originally tried to strip the Pledge in 2000.

Two courts, including the United States Supreme Court, have since dismissed Michael Newdow's misplaced attempts to abolish the words "under God" from the Pledge. Another court ruled not only that the state's public school students are allowed to recite the Pledge, but that they are required to! Why? Because the Pledge is a patriotic exercise, not a religious one.

Though not part of the original verse, Congress inserted the words "under God" in 1954 to distinguish between American and Soviet political views during the hottest part of the Cold War. Congress sought to underscore that, in America; people are born with certain inalienable rights. Our Declaration of Independence even states that Americans are "endowed by their Creator" with these rights. The Soviets, however, believed that one's rights came from the government, not their Creator, and consequently, those rights could be taken away at will.

The American model, alternatively, limits government and respects certain rights because they are absolute and indisputable. The government is bound to respect them. By inserting the phrase "under God" in the Pledge, Congress meant to reinforce America's political philosophy that the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is derived from a greater authority, whatever or whomever that may be, than a man-made government.

The phrase "under God" underscores our country's unique political and philosophical views. References to God have appeared in some of the most well-loved, highly-recognized speeches in history. Generations of children have proudly recited the Pledge of Allegiance in school.

There is not an official state religion in the United States, and we can all agree that the founding fathers never intended for there to be. But what they did intend was for our great nation, which

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was born as a result of oppression, both religious and governmental, to protect not only the state from the church but also the church from the state. They sought to establish a government free of religion but with a deep respect for religion, religious choice, and the role of a power greater than man in the undeniable freedoms of a country that has become the most powerful on Earth.

There exists no better way to pay tribute to this unique philosophy than with the two words “under God” in our symbolic unifying Pledge of Allegiance. And that is a right that Mr. Newdow, nor any other earthly man, can take away. It is time that Mr. Newdow and his left-wing liberal comrades stop using our courts as their personal political playground. Their continuing assault on the American way of life is superfluous at best, and has only advanced thus far with the aid of activist judges like Judge Karlton, who fail to understand their role in American government. Its got to stop!