



AMERICAN ATHEISTS

August 22, 2018

Dr. Debbie Jones
Superintendent
Bentonville School District
500 Tiger Boulevard
Bentonville, AR 72712

Mr. Travis Riggs
President, Board of Education
Bentonville School District
500 Tiger Boulevard
Bentonville, AR 72712

Re: Posters Submitted Pursuant to Act 911

Dear Superintendent Jones and Board President Riggs:

In 2017, Act 911 was passed into law, requiring classrooms and libraries in public facilities in the state of Arkansas to display donated prints of the national motto.¹ According to the statute, these displays must be durable posters or framed copies which contain at least the following three items:

1. The national motto of the United States, “In God We Trust”;
2. An accurate representation of the United States flag, which shall be centered under the national motto; and
3. An accurate representation of the Arkansas state flag.²

If posters meeting all of these requirements are donated, public buildings or facilities that are maintained or operated by state funds are required by law to display them.³ Act 911 does not preclude additions to the three requirements, nor does it give facilities the discretion to refuse to display posters that properly meet the three requirements.

Pursuant to Act 911, American Atheists hereby donates suitable laminated posters to Bentonville School District for use in all classrooms and libraries.⁴ We believe our posters are valuable educational tools that provide students with a historical and contextual understanding of the national motto. Our posters meet all statutory requirements. The laminated posters depict the national motto, “In God We Trust”, an accurate representation of the United States flag centered under the national motto, and an accurate representation of the Arkansas state flag. In order to comply with Act 911, Bentonville School District must display the donated posters in every classroom and library.

American Atheists has learned that some organizations are donating posters to various schools and districts which do not comply with the requirements of Act 911. For example, state Representative

¹ Ark. Code Ann. § 1-4-133 (2017); see Appendix I.

² Ark. Code Ann. § 1-4-133(a)(1) (2017).

³ Ark. Code Ann. § 1-4-133(b) (2017).

⁴ See Appendix II for the poster image.

Jim Dotson, who sponsored the bill that became Act 911, recently presented 891 framed copies of a poster that had been donated to the Bentonville School District by the American History and Heritage Foundation, framed by the American Legion Post with discounted supplies from Hobby Lobby.⁵ Rep. Dotson's posters depict "In God We Trust" in large font, with the American flag placed in the bottom left-hand corner of the poster, and the Arkansas flag in the bottom right-hand corner, side by side.⁶ The layout of these posters does not conform to § 1-4-133(a)(1)(B), requiring the United States flag to be centered under the national motto. Therefore, these posters should not be displayed pursuant to Act 911.

Our posters, meeting all statutory requirements, should be displayed. Please respond within five (5) business days to confirm that Bentonville School District will display the donated posters in each classroom as well as the number of posters that the district will require for this purpose. We thank Bentonville School District for their dedication to providing students with a comprehensive education, and look forward to seeing our donations integrated into classrooms and libraries. Please do not hesitate to contact me at agill@atheists.org or by phone at 202-588-5935 if you should have any questions about this donation or the relevant statute.

Very truly yours,



Alison Gill, Esq.
Legal and Policy Director
American Atheists

cc: All Members of the Bentonville Board of Education

⁵ 'In God We Trust' Posters to be Displayed in Arkansas Public Schools, Fox News Insider (Mar. 12, 2018, 1:16 PM), <http://insider.foxnews.com/2018/03/12/god-we-trust-posters-be-displayed-arkansas-public-schools-after-donations>;

⁶ Dave Perozek, 'In God we trust' signs going up in schools, Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette (Mar. 4, 2018, 1:11 AM), <http://www.nwaonline.com/news/2018/mar/04/in-god-we-trust-signs-going-up-in-school/>

Appendix I – Act 911

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.
Act 911 of the Regular Session

1 State of Arkansas
2 91st General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2017
4

As Engrossed: H3/14/17

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1980

5 By: Representative Dotson
6

For An Act To Be Entitled

8 *AN ACT TO AMEND ARKANSAS LAW CONCERNING THE DISPLAY*
9 *OF THE NATIONAL MOTTO OF THE UNITED STATES, "IN GOD*
10 *WE TRUST"; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.*
11

Subtitle

12
13
14 *THE NATIONAL MOTTO, "IN GOD WE TRUST",*
15 *DISPLAY ACT.*
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17
18 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
19

20 *SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter 1, is amended*
21 *to add an additional section to read as follows:*

22 *"1-4-133. Display of national motto.*

23 *(a)(1) If funds under subsection (b) of this section are available,*
24 *local school superintendents of the public schools in this state and the*
25 *administrative officials of state agencies shall place a durable poster or*
26 *framed copy representing:*

27 *(A) The national motto of the United States, "In God We*
28 *Trust";*

29 *(B) An accurate representation of the United States flag,*
30 *which shall be centered under the national motto; and*

31 *(C) An accurate representation of the Arkansas state flag.*

32 *(2) The materials in subdivision (a)(1) of this section may be*
33 *displayed in each:*

34 *(A) Public elementary and secondary school library and*
35 *classroom in this state; and*

36 *(B) Public building or facility in this state that is*



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1 maintained or operated by state funds.
2 (b) The copies or posters authorized under this section shall either
3 be donated or shall be purchased solely with funds made available through
4 voluntary contributions to the local school boards or the Building Authority
5 Division of the Department of Finance and Administration.

6
7 /s/Dotson

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10 **APPROVED: 04/05/2017**
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In 1956, at the height of the Cold War, Congress passed a law declaring
In God We Trust
the national motto of the United States in order to distinguish
the United States from the Soviet Union.

This replaced the traditional motto of the United States,
first adopted by Congress in 1782:

E Pluribus Unum

Latin for “Out of many, one”



This display was sponsored by American Atheists.
For more information, visit www.atheists.org/motto