



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: NOVEMBER 17, 2009

ITEM NUMBER:

**SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF THE DISPLAY OF THE NATIONAL MOTTO - IN GOD WE TRUST
- IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

DATE: OCTOBER 26, 2009

FROM: CITY MANAGER'S DEPARTMENT/ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

PRESENTATION MAYOR PRO TEM WENDY LEECE

BY:

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: ANN C. SHULTZ, 714 754-5667

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council determines a) whether to display the national motto - In God We Trust - in the City Council Chambers; and b) if so, how the motto is to be displayed.

BACKGROUND:

At their August 11, 2009 Study Session, the City Council received a report on the display and requested that this item be scheduled for consideration at a future City Council meeting. Mayor Pro Tem Wendy Leece has requested that the City Council consider whether to display the motto -In God We Trust - in the City Council Chambers.

ANALYSIS:

On July 30, 1956, the United States Congress voted to approve - In God We Trust - as the national motto. This motto is engraved above the entrance to the United States Senate Chamber and above the Speaker's dais in the House of Representatives. The words have been printed on US currency since 1864. In July 2006, the United States Senate unanimously passed resolution S. Con. Res. 96 "to commemorate, celebrate, and reaffirm the national motto of the United States on the 50th anniversary of its formal adoption."

In 2002, the City Council of Bakersfield, California voted in favor of prominently displaying the national motto in their Council Chambers. The effort to encourage cities throughout California to display the motto to promote patriotism was initiated by Mayor Jacquie Sullivan of Bakersfield that same year (**see Attachment 1**). According to Councilmember Sullivan, 57 cities in California have adopted and now display our national motto.

Fourteen cities in Orange County have approved the display of the motto in their City Council Chambers. They are: Brea, Buena Park, Cypress, Fountain Valley, Huntington Beach, Los Alamitos, Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, San Clemente, Seal Beach, Tustin, Villa Park, Westminster and Yorba Linda. The motto is displayed in a variety of ways in these cities: behind the Council dais; added to the city seal behind the council dais; in a separate location in the Council Chambers; and outside the entrance to the City Council Chambers.

The Pacific Justice Institute in Sacramento has committed to defending any City legally challenged on the display for no charge (**see Attachment 2**). However, no City in California has been legally challenged on this issue thus far. Attorneys from the Pacific Justice Institute were present at the August 11, 2009 Study Session and affirmed that they would defend the City on any legal challenge if Costa Mesa proceeds as the other 57 cities have in simply displaying the motto.

Mayor Pro Tem Leece committed to raising funds through private donations to pay for the display.

Staff met with a representative from America's Instant Signs (the company that installed Buena Park's and Yorba Linda's displays). Two other companies were contacted for estimates but chose not to respond. The following six options for display and placement of the motto are offered for City Council consideration (**see Attachment 3**).

Staff also received estimates for the addition of quotation marks and E Pluribus Unum. These additions would more than double the cost of the display.

Should the City Council approve the display it is suggested that they adopt the attached resolution (**see Attachment 4**). It is also suggested that they approve one of the options specifying the location of the display and the size and materials for the lettering.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

- 1) That the City Council approves the placement of a display of patriotic documents on the side walls of the City Council Chambers in addition to the display of the motto – In God We Trust - in the City Council Chambers. Should the City Council approve this, further research will be needed to determine which documents to display and how they will be displayed. Documents to be considered for display include: the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, the Constitution, and the Mayflower Compact.
- 2) That the City Council does not approve the display of the motto.

FISCAL REVIEW:

As previously noted, Mayor Pro Tem Leece has committed to raising the money for the display through private donations.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney's Office has reviewed the resolution and approved it as to form.

CONCLUSION:

That the City Council determines a) whether to display the national motto - In God We Trust - in the City Council Chambers; and b) if so, how the motto is to be displayed.

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COLLEEN O'DONOGHUE
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CITY ATTORNEY

DISTRIBUTION: In God We Trust – America, Inc.

ATTACHMENTS: 1 [Info from In God We Trust America, Inc.](#)
2 [Pacific Justice Institute](#)
3 [Display Options](#)
4 [Resolution](#)

In God We Trust display

October 27, 2009

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