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PRESS RELEASE

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Statement about Bredefeld’s “In God we trust” proposal

The Central Valley Alliance of Atheists and Skeptics (CVAAS) believes that placing “In God we trust” in the chambers of the Fresno City Council is divisive and exclusive. The CVAAS Board agrees that it would be better to have an inclusive motto, and there is none more inclusive or patriotic than the motto found on the Great Seal of the United States, created by our founders and first used by George Washington. To encourage the City of Fresno to adopt the Great Seal, or the motto, “E Pluribus Unum”, the CVAAS Board has agreed to raise matching funds to place either The Great Seal or “E Pluribus Unum” in the Fresno City Council chambers.

Fresno, CA (cvaas.org) – In answer to Fresno City Council member Garry Bredefeld’s proposal to place “In God we trust” on the wall of the Fresno City Council chambers, the Board of the Central Valley Alliance of Atheists and Skeptics is offering to match funding for an alternative proposal. CVAAS is proposing that the Great Seal of the United States or the motto found on the Great Seal, “E Pluribus Unum,” be placed instead.

Mr. Bredefeld is correct in that the courts have ruled that “In God we trust” is legal. However, he neglects to mention that they have done so because the courts determined that “In God we trust” “has no theological or ritualistic impact,” that, “its use is of patriotic or ceremonial character,” and that “the primary purpose of the slogan was secular, it served a secular ceremonial purpose.” (See *Aronow v. United States* and *O’Hair v. Blumenthal*).

Therefore, using “In God we trust” is lawful because it is essentially a theologically meaningless ceremonial statement.

“In God we trust” is different from our original motto in that it divides the citizens of the United States instead of uniting them.

Of the 360 thousand adults living in Fresno, it is statistically reasonable to predict that between 11 thousand to 40 thousand are atheists. (See US Census data for Fresno, the Religious Landscape Study by the Pew Research Center, and University of Kentucky study preprinted at osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/edzda)

This number triples if agnostics and secular people who do not identify as “atheist” are included. (See “Religious nones are becoming more secular” by the Pew Research Center)

Mr. Bredefeld has recently stated in his YouTube video, “It’s about faith. It’s about faith in God.” This goes against the findings of court rulings. In this same video Bredefeld states that, “the (Fresno City Council) chambers belongs to the citizens of Fresno.”

Mr. Bredefeld wrote in the Fresno Bee, “Every time before we begin our council meeting, a religious leader leads the Council and people in the Chamber in prayer. If you don’t want to participate in prayer, you don’t have to.”

With these words Mr. Bredefeld has made it obvious that the chambers of the Fresno City Council are not meant for ALL the citizens of Fresno. According to Bredefeld, the Fresno City Council invites only religious leaders of Fresno to give an invocation.

The CVAAS Board asks Mr. Bredefeld and the rest of the Fresno City Council, “Why are you excluding tens of thousands of the citizens of Fresno?”

You may find a more detailed statement from CVAAS on our website, including a link to our GoFundMe campaign to raise money in support of the first motto of the United States (see cvaas.org).

About: The Central Valley Alliance of Atheists and Skeptics is a nonprofit educational organization that promotes secular viewpoints in public discourse, educates the public on the use of rational inquiry and positive secular philosophy, discourages church-state entanglement, and urges camaraderie and cooperation among the secular community and their supporters.

Find our Electronic Press Kit with Logos, Images, and other useful press information in the “About” section at cvaas.org.

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