

WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song

Pledge of Allegiance

FRANCIS BELLAMY

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On October 21, 1892, schools across the country celebrated Columbus Day, and with it inaugurated what would become the national Pledge of Allegiance. Written by Francis Bellamy (1855–1931), a Baptist minister, Christian Socialist, and an editor of The Youth’s Companion, the Pledge was to be used by schools at their flag-raising ceremonies.¹ Though the Pledge was officially recognized by Congress only in 1942, it quickly became popular in American schools, with many states adopting it for daily school exercises. In 1954, by an act of Congress, signed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower on Flag Day, the words “under God” were added to the Pledge.

If you have memorized the Pledge, try to write it down from memory without looking at the text. Do you have it right? Consider each line and key word. What does it mean to “pledge”? What is “Allegiance”? Why should students pledge allegiance to the flag? What is a “republic,” and what distinguishes our republic? What is the relation between allegiance to the flag and allegiance to the republic? How important are these allegiances for being an American citizen?

I pledge Allegiance to the Flag
of the United States of America
and to the Republic for which it stands,
one Nation under God, indivisible,
with liberty and justice for all.

¹ Bellamy’s original version read: “I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”