

March 23, 2004

 Share  E-mail  Print

The Gallup Brain: "One Nation Under God"

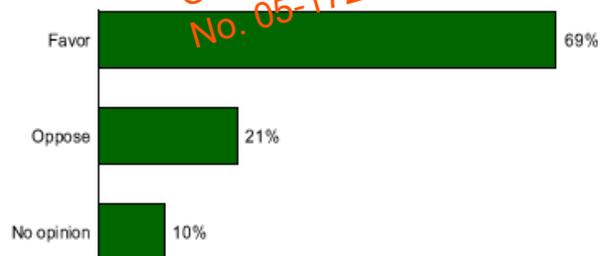
by Linda Lyons, Education and Youth Editor

On Wednesday, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear oral arguments on the constitutionality of allowing public schools to lead students in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, which contains the phrase, "one nation under God." A look in Gallup's online public opinion database, the Gallup Brain, shows that this is a new chapter in a national discussion that began more than 50 years ago.

In the 1950s, during the height of the Cold War and the anti-communist sentiment that went with it, politicians suggested that the phrase, "under God," be added to the existing pledge to the flag, to distinguish a religious America from non-religious communist countries. A substantial majority of Americans, 69%, said they supported the addition, according to a 1953 Gallup Poll, while 21% were opposed.

1953 Support for Adding "Under God" to the Pledge

It has been suggested that the words, "under God" should be added to the Oath of Allegiance to the flag so that it would read: "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." Would you favor or oppose this change?



"From this day forward, the millions of our schoolchildren will daily proclaim in every city and town, every village and rural schoolhouse, the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty," declared President Dwight D. Eisenhower on Flag Day in 1954, after signing the bill that added "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance.

Patriotism, Prayer, or Both?

By 2000, the Cold War had become a chapter in history books. That year, Michael A. Newdow, an atheist from Sacramento, Calif., filed a lawsuit arguing that his daughter who attended an area school was injured when she had to "watch and listen as her state-employed teacher in her state-run school leads her classmates in a ritual proclaiming there is a God." A district court judge ultimately dismissed the case. But the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals -- the largest appellate court in the United States -- reversed the decision and ruled that the inclusion of "under God" in the pledge violates the Establishment Clause in the Constitution.

If the Supreme Court does not reverse this ruling, children in the public schools in the nine states covered under the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals would no longer be allowed to recite the pledge, and

RELATED ITEMS

Supreme Court

Do Teens Feel Pressured to Recite Pledge?

October 5, 2004

Americans Indivisible on Pledge of Allegiance

May 4, 2004

A Look at Americans and Religion Today

March 23, 2004

Americans Judge Motives for Church-State Lawsuits

November 4, 2003

Supreme Court Prepares for More Controversy

October 7, 2003

Christianity, the Constitution, and the Courts

September 9, 2003

Supreme Court Prohibits Student-Led Prayer in School

June 20, 2000

GALLUP WORLD POLL



The Gallup World Poll gives you the power to know - and act on - what the world is thinking.

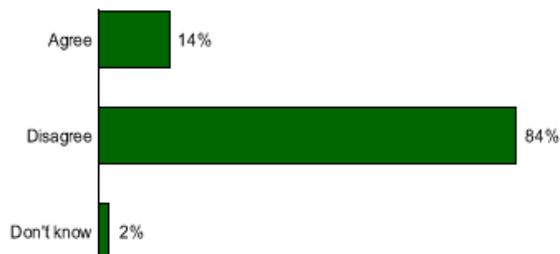
[Learn More...](#)

the ban could apply to public schools across the nation.

How did the American public feel about all this? In a June 2002 Gallup Poll, Gallup asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed with the federal court's ruling. Eighty-four percent said they disagreed, and 14% agreed.

2002 Support for Court Ruling the Pledge Unconstitutional

As you may know, this week a federal court decided that it was unconstitutional for the Pledge of Allegiance to be said in public school classrooms. The court based its decision on the fact that the pledge includes the words "under God." Do you agree or disagree with the court's decision in this case?



Religiosity Then and Now

Given the high degree of religiosity among Americans, it's no surprise that support for the phrase, "under God," remains high. Gallup research shows that two of the most indicative markers of religiosity -- belief in God and church attendance -- have changed relatively little over the last 50 years. In 1954, 98% of Americans told Gallup they believed in God, and in 1999, the last time the question was asked, 94% said they believed in either God (86%) or a universal spirit (8%). Forty-six percent of Americans said they had attended church within the last seven days in 1954; 43% said so in 2003.

Bottom Line

Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow may be a troubling case, particularly for a court that begins each session with "God save the United States and this honorable court." In addition, the motto, "In God We Trust," appears on U.S. currency and many patriotic songs include references to God ("God Bless America"). Newdow, a non-practicing lawyer, has pledged to continue his attempt to overturn these national expressions of religion, as well as others. The Supreme Court hopes to rule on this issue by June, but the most recent Gallup data suggest that there is a broad public mandate to leave well enough alone.

Click below to get more stories, RSS feeds, and e-mail alerts on these topics:

Religion and Social Trends

Cited in Newdow v. Rio Linda Union School District, No. 05-17257 archived on March 25, 2010

GALLUP DAILY NEWS

- Politics
- Business
- Wellbeing
- World
- Services
- World Poll
- Muslim Studies
- Well-Being Index

- Resources**
- Blogs
- Videos
- Topics A-Z
- WorldView
- Research Reports
- E-mail Alerts
- RSS
- Widget
- Mobile

GALLUP CONSULTING

- Functional Practices**
- Applied Behavioral Economics
- Customer Engagement
- Employee Engagement
- Strengths-Based Selection
- Strengths-Based Development
- Leadership & Succession
- Employment Branding
- Market Research
- Brand Engagement

- Industry Practices**
- Automotive
- Business Services
- Education
- Faith
- Financial Services
- Government
- Healthcare
- Hospitality
- Manufacturing

GALLUP UNIVERSITY

- Courses/Programs
- Registration
- ABOUT GALLUP
- Careers
- Global Offices
- Experts
- Senior Scientists
- Speakers Bureau
- Contact Us

GALLUP PRESS

- Gallup Management Journal
- Books
- Media Inquiries
- More Gallup Sites**
- Gallup Europe
- Muslim West Facts
- Well-Being Index
- StrengthsFinder
- Student Poll

Cited in *Newdow v. Rio Linda Union School District*,
No. 05-17257 archived on March 25, 2010