Written by Joe Wolverton, II, J.D. on February 27, 2023

Arizona Poised to Make Pledge of Allegiance Mandatory in Schools

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The Arizona state Legislature is close to passing a bill that would require the state's public-school students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, but very few conservatives are aware of the pledge's socialist origins.

"We stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance every day on this floor. What's good for us is good for the children," State Representative Barbara Parker (R-Mesa), who sponsored House Bill 2523, said during a hearing.

Specifically, the text of H.B. 2523 mandates that public schools in the Grand Canyon State "set aside a specific time each day for students … to recite the pledge of allegiance to the United States flag," adding that "each student shall recite the pledge of allegiance to the United States at this time." Only students over 18 or whose parents have signed a waiver would be exempt from the bill's demands.

Republican Senator Wendy Rogers of Flagstaff said, "This is to make sure that students growing up understand the country in which they live and embrace the citizenship and the founding principles that we hold so dear."

The bill has thus far been voted for along party lines, with all Republicans in the state Legislature voting in favor of the bill and Democrats opposing it.

Now, there are many who oppose this bill on the grounds that it violates the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In support of this position, opponents cite the Supreme Court's opinion in the case of *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*.

"Compulsory unification of opinion achieves only the unanimity of the graveyard," Justice Robert H. Jackson wrote in that decision, adding that "if there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in matters of politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein."

While the opinion of several black-robed oligarchs may be persuasive to some, I believe that there is more to be learned about this bill and its mandated reciting of an oath of fidelity to the flag from the history of the Pledge of Allegiance itself.

In 1892, a socialist named Francis Bellamy wrote the Pledge of Allegiance for *Youth's Companion*, a

national magazine for youth published in Boston. The magazine had a national circulation of around 500,000, the largest of its day.

Two progressive businessmen, Daniel Ford and his nephew, James Upham, owned *Youth's Companion*.

As strange as it may sound to those of us accustomed to seeing flags fly in front of every school and often in every classroom, one hundred years ago the American flag was rarely seen in schools. Upham changed that. In 1888, his magazine initiated a campaign to sell American flags to the public schools, and by 1892 had sold them to about 26,000 schools.

In 1891, Upham had the idea of using the celebration of the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of America to promote the use of the flag in the public schools. The same year, the magazine hired Francis Bellamy, a known radical and self-described "Christian socialist," to help Upham market the flags.

Francis Bellamy was the first cousin of noted American socialist Edward Bellamy. Edward Bellamy's novel *Looking Backward* was published in 1888, and described a utopian Boston in the year 2000. The book spurred an elitist socialist movement in Boston known as "Nationalism," whose members used their wealth and influence to lobby Congress to assume ownership of most of the American economy. Francis Bellamy was a member of this movement and a vice president of its support group, the Society of Christian Socialists.

In his capacity as a Baptist minister, Francis Bellamy preached on the "virtues" of socialism and the "evils" of capitalism. He gave a lecture entitled "Jesus the Socialist," and delivered several sermons on "The Socialism of the Primitive Church." In 1891, he was forced to resign from his Boston church, Bethany Baptist Church, because of his socialist activities. He then joined the staff of *Youth's Companion* full-time.

By February 1892, Francis Bellamy and James Upham had acquired the endorsement of the National Education Association (NEA) for the national public schools' observance of Columbus Day, with the NEA agreeing to help the spread the use of the American flag and the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

By June, Bellamy and Upham had convinced Congress and President Benjamin Harrison to endorse their scheme by issuing a national proclamation declaring the company's public-school flag ceremony the center of the national Columbus Day celebrations for 1892.

The Pledge of Allegiance as originally penned ran: "I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

There are several words in the above brief history of the authorship and purpose of the Pledge of Allegiance that are major red flags to all conservatives and friends of liberty — socialist, Christian socialist, elitist socialist, virtues of socialism, evils of capitalism, and National Education Association. All of these concepts and organizations are foundation stones of the Pledge of Allegiance, and should give pause to parents otherwise inclined to support Arizona's bill to mandate its recitation.

The pledge's words "one nation" and "indivisible" run contrary to the constitutionally established form of government and the relationship between the states and the federal government the Framers believed they were creating.

Here's a bit of history in support of this assertion.

In 1788 Patrick Henry spoke before the Virginia Ratifying Convention warning of "consolidating tendencies" present in the proposed federal government:

> If consolidation proves to be as mischievous to this country as it has been to other countries, what will the poor inhabitants of this country do? This government will operate like an ambuscade. It will destroy the state governments, and swallow the liberties of the people, without giving previous notice.

Henry later noted that "One government cannot reign over so extensive a country as this is, without absolute despotism," and added that "consolidation must end in the destruction of our liberties."

James Madison rose to refute Patrick Henry's claims about the 13 states being consolidated into one nation:

> Were it, as the gentleman asserts, a consolidated government, the assent of a majority of the people would be sufficient for its establishment; and, as a majority have adopted it already, the remaining states would be bound by the act of the majority, even if they unanimously reprobated it. But, sir, no state is bound by it without its own consent.

In *The Federalist*, No. 39, Madison elaborated on this point, insisting that should the Constitution be adopted, it would be:

> the act of the people, as forming so many independent States, *not as forming one aggregate nation*…. Each State, in ratifying the Constitution, is considered as a sovereign body, independent of all others, and only to be bound by its own voluntary act. In this relation, then, the new Constitution will, if established, be a FEDERAL, and *not a NATIONAL constitution.* [Emphasis added.]

So, as we learn from the words of the Founders themselves, the Constitution *did not* form one nation — rather it created a confederated union of 13 (now 50) independent and sovereign republics.

Finally, a friend and frequent correspondent of several Founding Fathers, the Abbe de Mably, praised the United States for avoiding the despotic danger of forming one nation. As Mably explained in a letter he wrote to John Adams:

> It is a great advantage for the Americans, that the thirteen States have not confounded together their rights, their independence and their freedom, for the purpose of forming but one republic, establishing the same laws, and acknowledging the same magistrates.

After passing the state House of Representatives by a vote of 31-29, Arizona's bill proceeds to the state Senate, where it is predicted to also pass along party lines.

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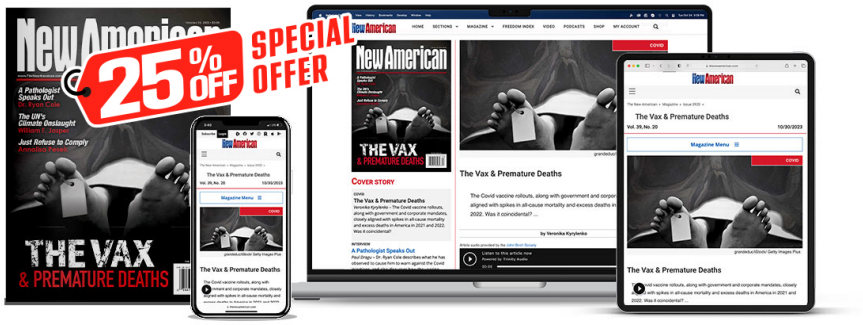

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