

ANALYZING THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE*

For Americans, the most familiar expression of citizenship is taking the Pledge of Allegiance. The Pledge is something you have recited countless times and probably know by heart:

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.

The original draft of the Pledge of Allegiance was written by James B. Upham in 1888 and revised slightly four years later by Francis Bellamy, who included it in the 400th anniversary celebration of Columbus's first voyage to the New World. The phrase "under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance by act of Congress in 1954.

1. What is involved in pledging allegiance? What does allegiance mean? What does the taking of the pledge say about your relationship to government?
2. Why do we pledge allegiance to the American flag? Why not to the president of the United States, our members of Congress, or the justices of the Supreme Court?
3. Do we have the right to withhold our allegiance? What would be the consequences of doing that? If you were born here, when and how do you decide to be an American citizen? If you were not born an American citizen, how do you become one? How is a citizen different from someone else living in this country?
4. What is a "republic"? Does the Pledge define what that word means? How does a republic differ from a democracy?

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