

Chairperson, members of the committee, my name is Mamie Havelka, Commander, North Dakota American Legion, from Bismarck ND. I am here to testify in favor of saying the Pledge of Allegiance in our schools. As a military veteran, I hold our nation's founding documents dear – and our National Anthem and Pledge of Allegiance go along with the Declaration of Independence and Constitution to remind us of our civic role as citizens of the United States of America.

The Pledge of Allegiance is a quick summary of the principles of our nation. By pledging allegiance **to the flag of the United States of America**, we are reminded that we are not pledging fealty to a KING, but to a set of ideas and principles that are greater than a president, king, or premier. By stating that our nation is a **republic**, we are reminded that we are a nation of laws – not of heredity or another form. By stating that our republic stands as **one nation under God**, we are reminded that there is a higher power who guides our national life. This is the only phrase that I have ever heard any opposition to, but it always comes with a strained set of arguments related to the separation of church and state. It does not establish a national religion at all, it only reminds us when we pledged that the preponderance of evidence shows that we are under the eye of watchful providence, when we state the word **“Indivisible”**, we are recognizing that we were once divided unto bloody death and that we must strive to remain united. And at the end of our short pledge, we state our aspirations that we exist **with liberty and justice for all** – which has often been difficult to achieve, but for which we must all work tirelessly.

I am a member of two veterans organizations and American Legion Auxiliary, retired 33 years with the USAF. I am representing the North Dakota Department of the American Legion. At the opening of each meeting in these groups we say the Pledge of Allegiance – and I support that our school-age youth say the Pledge of Allegiance in our schools.