

HOUSE RESOLUTION 107

By Watson

A RESOLUTION urging Tennessee Counties to allow the Ten Commandments to be posted in their respective courthouses.

WHEREAS, in order to preserve domestic tranquility and protect the blessings of liberty, the foundation of any government must rest upon both law and morality; and

WHEREAS, the underpinnings of our system of government are rooted in a steadfast belief in Almighty God and the conviction that all morality, justice, and unalienable rights derive from his gracious hand; and

WHEREAS, most of the political theorists embraced by our Founding Fathers, from Locke to Blackstone, espoused the Natural Law Theory, and as John Quincy Adams explained, “the laws of nature and of nature’s God...of course presupposes the existence of a God, the moral ruler of the universe, and a rule of right and wrong, or just and unjust, binding upon man, preceding all institutions of human society and of government”; and

WHEREAS, the Founders’ desire to publicly acknowledge God as the source of America’s strength and direction is reflected in many of our founding documents and practices, from the Mayflower Compact and the Declaration of Independence to the National Motto and Thanksgiving Day celebrations; and

WHEREAS, since our nation’s birth, federal, state, and local governing bodies have continued to invoke Divine guidance and celebrate the role religion has played in American life by issuing faith-based proclamations and opening each legislative session with prayer and supplication, a practice instituted by the First United States Congress and which has continued unbroken for more than two centuries; and

WHEREAS, throughout America’s rich history, both the citizenry and their elected officials alike have deeply respected the Ten Commandments, its profound influence on the

formation of American legal thought, and its fundamental place in the history of law and government as a whole; and

WHEREAS, the Supreme Court has repeatedly recognized the historical importance of these sacred texts and even upheld Sunday closing laws, which originated in the Fourth Commandment's exhortation to remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy; and

WHEREAS, countless depictions of Moses and the Ten Commandments can be found throughout our nation's capital as a testament to the Decalogue's undeniable role in our country's legal tradition, including the magnificent displays adorning the Supreme Court Building, the Library of Congress's Jefferson Building, the National Archives, the Department of Justice, the Ronald Reagan Building, the federal courthouse that is home to both the Court of Appeals and the District Court for the District of Columbia, and the Chamber of the United States House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, eighty-eight Tennessee counties have already adopted resolutions acknowledging the historical significance of the Ten Commandments and pledging to defend their right to display them; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that these revered tablets continue to grace our public buildings, as reminders to this generation and the next of the vital role the Ten Commandments and its Author have played in shaping our great republic; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that this body hereby urges all Tennessee counties to allow the Ten Commandments to be posted in their respective courthouses.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.