

Opinion: The history of 'In God We Trust'

By David Mislin, *The Conversation*

In his address to the National Prayer Breakfast on the morning of Feb. 8, President Trump emphasized the centrality of faith in American life. After describing the country as a “nation of believers,” Trump reminded his audience that American currency features the phrase “In God We Trust” as does the Pledge of Allegiance. He also declared that “our rights are not given to us by man” but “come from our Creator.”

These remarks come a week after Trump linked religion with American identity in his first State of the Union address. On Jan. 30, he similarly invoked “In God We Trust” while proclaiming an “American way” in which “faith and family, not government and bureaucracy, are the center of the American life.”

But the history of such language is more complex than Trump’s assertions suggest.

The place of “In God We Trust,” and similar invocations of God in national life, have been a subject of debate. From my perspective as a religious history scholar they reflect a particular view of the United States, not a universally accepted “American way.”

The Civil War

Political rhetoric linking the United States with a divine power emerged on a large scale with the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. M.R. Watkinson, a Pennsylvania clergyman, encouraged the placement of “In God We Trust” on coins at the war’s outset in order to help the North’s cause. Such language, Watkinson wrote, would “place us openly under the

divine protection.”

Putting the phrase on coins was just the beginning.

In 1864, with the Civil War still raging, a group supported by the North’s major Protestant denominations began advocating change to the preamble of the Constitution. The proposed language – which anticipated President Trump’s remarks about the origin of Americans’ rights – would have declared that Americans recognized “Almighty God as the source of all authority and power in civil government.”

If the amendment’s supporters had succeeded in having their way, Christian belief would be deeply embedded in the United States government.

But, such invocations of God in national politics were not to last. Despite lobbying by major Protestant denominations such as the Methodists, this so-called Sovereignty of God amendment was never ratified.

Though “In God We Trust” was added to coins, it was not added to the increasingly common paper money. In fact, when coins were redesigned late in the 19th century, it disappeared from coins as well.

As I demonstrate in my book, these developments were related to the spread of secularism in the post-Civil War U.S. For many people at the time, placing religious language in the Constitution or on symbols of government was not consistent with American ideals.

The revival of ‘In God We Trust’

The 1950s, however, witnessed a dramatic resurgence of religious language in government and politics. It was that decade that brought “In God We Trust” into widespread use.

In 1955, President Dwight Eisenhower signed a bill placing the phrase on all American currency. One sponsor of that

legislation, Congressman Charles Bennett, echoed the sentiments that had inspired the Sovereignty of God amendment during the Civil War. Bennett proclaimed, that the U.S. “was founded in a spiritual atmosphere and with a firm trust in God.”

The next year, “In God We Trust” was adopted as the first official motto of the United States.

Both of these developments reflected the desire to emphasize Americans’ religious commitment in the early years of the Cold War. Historians such as Jonathan Herzog have chronicled how leaders ranging from President Eisenhower to the evangelist Billy Graham stressed on the strong faith of the nation in setting the U.S. apart from the godlessness of Soviet communism.

Recently, however, Princeton University historian Kevin Kruse has shown that religious language was not merely rhetoric against communism. “In God We Trust” reflected domestic concerns as well.

The belief in American religiosity that put “In God We Trust” on coins and made it the national motto in the 1950s had emerged over several decades. Conservative businessmen had allied with ministers, including Billy Graham, to combat the social welfare policies and government expansion that began with Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal. These wide-ranging programs, designed to tackle the Great Depression, irked many conservatives. They objected to government intervention in business and Roosevelt’s support for labor unions.

As Kruse notes, this alliance of conservative business leaders and ministers linked “faith, freedom, and free enterprise.”

In this way then, Trump’s repeated assertions of “In God We Trust” could be said to reflect certain American values. But, as my research shows, for much of U.S. history, the acceptance of such values ebbed and flowed.

“In God We Trust” is not a motto that reflects universally shared historical values. Rather it represents a particular political, economic and religious perspective – one that is embraced by Trump and the modern GOP.

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Plastic wine bottles an option for the outdoors

By Mike Pomranz, Food & Wine

We can be honest with ourselves: The glass wine bottle is more about tradition than logic. Glass is heavy. It's breakable. And though it's recyclable, the bottle's weight and shape come with its own carbon footprint issues.

Glass wine bottles clearly have a few problems—but is one of them that glass makes it a pain to take wine on a hike? And would that finally convince you to try out wine sold in a plastic bottle?

Packaging giant Amcor announced it would be showcasing its line of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic wine bottles at the Unified Wine & Grape Symposium.

Though the lighter, less breakable packaging is often touted for its environmental benefits, this time around, Amcor took another, somewhat odd approach, pushing plastic wine bottles as an option for the active wine drinker.

[Read the whole story](#)

NDOT adding fencing for animals along rural Hwy. 50

By Kenzie Bales, KRNV-TV

The Nevada Department of Transportation is planning a major fencing project along Highway 50 in Dayton in hopes of preventing vehicle and wildlife collisions.

Spokeswoman Meg Ragonese says the project tentatively planned for late fall 2018 or early spring 2019 will include approximately 10 additional miles of wildlife fencing from Stagecoach to the new USA Parkway extension in Silver Springs.

Right now – six and a half miles are fenced between east Dayton and Stagecoach and three miles are enclosed between USA Parkway and 95A in Silver Springs.

Read the whole story

Prepping skis for Olympics is art and science

By Julie Brown, Powder

For the world's most elite ski racers, when a win on the World Cup is a matter of hundredths of seconds, the right tune can make or break a competition.

Which is why every ski racer has a person whose job it is to make sure the skis are tuned to be as fast as possible. Lindsey Vonn's ski technician is World Cup wax room veteran Heinz Haemmerle. Ted Ligety works with Austrian Alex Martin. Last winter, Travis Ganong brought rookie Lukas Rottinger onboard.

The tune is in the details. It is as much about matching notes on time to temperatures and measurements as it is a feeling of what works, what does not, and most importantly, what the racer wants.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- West Shore Café has named Robb Wyss executive chef.
 - There will be a blood drive March 2, noon-5pm at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center.
 - The Douglas County Board of Commissioners is accepting **applications** for appointment to the Audit Committee. Deadline to apply is 5pm March 9.
 - Steve Miller Band and Peter Frampton will hit the stage at Harveys in Stateline on Aug. 17 at 7pm.
 - The warm room in South Lake Tahoe is having a volunteer training on Feb. 22, 4:30-6pm at 1195 Rufus Allen Blvd. **RSVP online.**
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Some Styrofoam products to be outlawed in SLT

By Lake Tahoe News

Starting this summer there should be a whole lot less Styrofoam in South Lake Tahoe.

The City Council this month gave direction to staff to come back with an ordinance that would limit the use of polystyrene by businesses in town.

The product, which does not decompose, not only adds to landfills, but can be a further environmental hazard when small pieces look like food to animals.

The ban will affect restaurants the most, though many are already using to-go containers that are biodegradable. Some are compostable.

The presentation by Tracy Sheldon showed that switching the product should not be a huge financial burden to eateries.

Restaurants and other eating establishments will also have to ask people if they want a straw or plastic utensils, instead of automatically bringing it to the table or putting it in the to-go bag.

The council also opted to disallow the sales of coolers made with polystyrene.

The city for several years has had a policy in place through the special events permit that prohibits polystyrene. That remains intact.

The ordinance is expected to be presented to the council in March so it can be adopted in time before the summer tourist season.

Water conservation slipping in California

By Paul Rogers, Bay Area News Group

As California suffers through another dry winter, increasing fears that drought conditions may be returning, the state's residents are dropping conservation habits that were developed during the last drought and steadily increasing their water use with each passing month.

A new analysis of state water records by this news organization found California's urban residents used 13.7 percent less water last year in the first eight months after Gov. Jerry Brown declared an end to the drought emergency than they used in the same eight-month period in 2013. But in each of those eight months last year, the water savings dropped from 20 percent in May to 2.8 percent in an unseasonably dry December.

"We are having a very dry winter again," said Heather Cooley, water program director at the Pacific Institute, an Oakland nonprofit that studies water use patterns. "That wet winter we saw last year could have been one wet winter in a 10-to-12 year drought period. We have to be very cautious about our water use."

Read the whole story

Fundraiser to benefit veterans

The second Annual Nowruz “New Year” Celebration Feast to benefit Veterans Healing Camp will be March 27 from 5-10pm at the Casino Fandango Buffet Banquet Room in Carson City.

This is a casual and festive fundraiser that features food, music, dancing, silent auction and a door prize.

Nowruz is the ancient Persian “New Year” celebrated since 1700 B.C. that occurs on the first day of spring at the vernal equinox.

The celebration begins with fun, fellowship and information about Veterans Healing Camp. The buffet dinner feast starts at 6pm.

Tickets are \$40 and are available at the Casino Fandango cashier cage or by contacting Shahla Fadaie at 775.781.2394.

Veterans Healing Camp is nonprofit located in the heart of Silver Springs that is dedicated to helping local veterans make a successful transition from military to civilian life.

International Skiing History Association to give awards at Squaw

The International Skiing History Association, the nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve and advance the

knowledge of ski history and to increase public awareness of the sport's heritage, will honor seven historians at its 26th annual awards ceremony during Skiing History Days at Squaw Valley next month.

The March 23 awards banquet will be in conjunction with the NASTAR 50th anniversary celebration and national championships. Tickets are available **online**.

Leading Chinese ski historian Shan Zhaojian, considered the father of modern skiing in China, will be honored at the banquet with a lifetime achievement award. The Chinese delegation will stage a demonstration of ancient Altai skiing on the afternoon of March 23, accompanied by Sierra longboard racers from the Plumas Ski Club.

The awards banquet will also include a special NASTAR 50th anniversary presentation.

First established in 1993, the ISHA Awards honor the year's best creative works of ski history, including books, films, websites and other media projects.

El Dorado Savings reports 2017 earnings

Placerville-based El Dorado Savings Bank reported after tax earnings for 2017 of \$13,915,922. This is an increase from earnings of \$12,981,836 in 2016.

El Dorado ended the year with assets of \$2,173,437,132, a \$62 million increase from year-end 2016, and savings deposits rose by \$50.2 million during 2017.

"The continued strong performance of the bank's investments and loan portfolio contributed to the consistent earnings," CEO George L. Cook Jr. said in a statement. "We maintained our focus on originating good quality residential loans in our local communities" said Cook "and we were pleased that El Dorado ended the year with only one foreclosed property on the books."

El Dorado operates 31 offices in Northern California and four offices in Northern Nevada.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report