President George Washington, on April 30, 1789, said: "It would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that His benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States a Government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes, and may enable every instrument employed in its administration to execute with success the functions allotted to His charge. In tendering this homage to the Great Author of every public and private good, I assure myself that it expresses your sentiments not less than my own, nor those of my fellow citizens at large less than either. No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than those of the United States."

President Thomas Jefferson on March 4, 1805, said: "I shall need, too, the favor of that Being in whose hands we are, who led our fathers, as Israel of old, from their native land and planted them in a country flowing with all the necessaries and comforts of life; who has covered our infancy with His providence and our riper years with His wisdom and power, and to whose goodness I ask you to join in supplications with me that He will so enlighten the minds of your servants, guide their councils, and prosper their measures that whatsoever they do shall result in your good, and shall secure to you the peace, friendship, and approbation of all nations."

On March 4, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said: "In this dedication of a nation we humbly ask the blessing of God. May He protect each and every one of us. May He guide me in the days to come."

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, January 21, 1957, said: "Before all else, we seek, upon our common labor as a nation, the blessings of Almighty God. And the hopes in our hearts fashion the deepest prayers of our whole people."

President John F. Kennedy, January 20, 1961, said: "The world is very different now . . . . And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe — the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God."

President Lyndon B. Johnson on November 22, 1963, said: "I will do my best. That is all I can do. I ask for your help — and God's."

It is our opinion that the most important decision ever handed down by the Supreme Court is this one which embraced a concept of "neutrality" and made it applicable to the right to pray to God in the public schools of this Republic. It is this we desire to rectify. We do want Presidents who, when they are inaugurated, will do as all our Presidents have done — call upon Almighty God. And a part of the training of our Presidents is in the public schools of this nation. A nation devoted to God is not a Constitutional establishment of religion.

In view of the position that I maintain, therefore, and that I have briefly sought to outline, may I suggest that the following phrase be added to the first section of the proposed Becker Amendment, so that that section will read as follows: "Nothing in this Constitution shall be deemed to prohibit the offering, reading from, or listening to prayers or Biblical Scriptures, *provided such prayers are not prepared or prescribed by a state or any state agency,* and, if participation therein is on a voluntary basis, in any governmental or public school, institution, or place." In making this suggestion I am seeking to honor the position of the Court in the New York Regents' case, and this would properly be covered in the phrase of the Tenth Amendment, "nor prohibted by it to the states." The Becker Amendment would therefore include this prohibition against the establishment of official state prayers such as New York State sought to impose.

I hope that the Committee will consider the position that I represent as a possible solution to the problem that confronts us all.

I thank you very much.

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