P.S. to the NEWS
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RELEASE: December 21

THE PRAYER AMENDMENT

It has been eleven years since the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its decision banning prayers from public schools, but it still is a mystery how any judge could say that prayer violates the First Amendment, when all that Amendment says is that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." Saying a prayer is certainly not the same thing as establishing a Federal religion.

Justice Hugo Black simply rewrote the First Amendment to inject in it a new meaning which for 171 years no President, no Congress, and no Court had ever detected. This new meaning, according to Justice Black, prohibits children in public schools from saying this prayer: "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our country."

In writing this opinion, Justice Black not only ignored the clear language of the Constitution, but he also ignored American history. The men who wrote the Constitution and the First Amendment were educated in schools where daily prayers were recited. Prayer has always been, and still, is a part of our official public life, beginning with the Declaration of Independence.

The Supreme Court and other Federal courts open each day with this prayer: "God save the United States and this Honorable Court." Both the Senate and the House of Representatives open each session with a prayer. The U.S. Government has always approved and supported

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chaplains to lead prayers for the armed forces, in our military academies, and in our prisons. Our Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag contains the words "under God," and our currency bears the legend, "In God We Trust."

In dissent, Justice Stewart expressed the views of the majority of Americans when he said he could not "see how an 'official religion' is established by letting those who want to say a prayer say it. On the contrary, I think that to deny the wish of these schoolchildren to join in reciting this prayer is to deny them the opportunity of sharing in the spiritual heritage of our nation."

The trouble with some Supreme Court Justices is that, once they are appointed, they begin to think they have been annointed as high priests to rewrite our Constitution and laws. Justice Jackson once stated the Supreme Court's attitude rather bluntly in these words: "We are not final because we are infallible, on the contrary, we are infallible only because we are final."

However, the Supreme Court is not final. The truly final authority is in the people through amendments to the U.S. Constitution. It is time to pass a series of constitutional amendments to undo the mischief the Supreme Court has wrought in many areas, and there is no better place to start than by restoring prayer and moral training to our schools.

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