

State of Alaska
Department of Law

Frank H. Murkowski
Governor
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001
NEWS RELEASE



Gregg Renkes
Attorney General
907-465-3600
FAX: 907-465-2075
www.law.state.ak.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 11, 2003

**ALASKA ATTORNEY GENERAL JOINS 49 OTHER STATE
ATTORNEYS GENERAL IN SEEKING SUPREME COURT
REVIEW OF PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE CASE**

(Juneau, AK) - Alaska Attorney General Gregg Renkes today joined 49 other state attorneys general in urging the United States Supreme Court to review the Pledge of Allegiance case. "The court's ruling is clearly wrong and once again shows that the Ninth Circuit continues to be out-of-touch with the rest of the country," said Attorney General Renkes.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals held, in *Newdow v. United States of America and Elk Grove Unified School District*, that the Pledge of Allegiance violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Idaho Attorney General Wasden and Oklahoma Attorney General Edmondson released the states' "friend of the court" brief this morning during a news conference held at the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) summer meeting in Oklahoma City. The attorneys general of 49 states joined the brief and the California attorney general will file a separate brief also urging the Supreme Court to hear the case.

"For almost 50 years, willing Americans of all ages have been reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in its current form in public schools and other forums," Idaho Attorney General Wasden said. "Most likely, very few of us ever dreamed that a federal court would decide the Pledge of Allegiance constitutes an establishment of religion."

Saying that the Ninth Circuit's decision "defies a nation," the attorneys general's brief urges the court to grant the petitions for certiorari because the decision in *Newdow* is contrary the laws of 41 states and conflicts with the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals' decision in *Sherman v. Community Consol. Sch. Dist. 21*.

"I have no doubt, given the Ninth Circuit's notorious reputation for being the most reversed circuit in the nation, that this decision will be reviewed and reversed," said Renkes. He echoed the sentiments of the other attorneys general stating that, "For decades, it has been well understood that the Pledge and other patriotic exercises were well within the Constitutional parameters of the Establishment clause."

Currently, 41 states, including Alaska, have laws in effect providing for daily recitation of the Pledge. Similar laws will soon take effect in three states. All of the state statutes include a provision protecting the right of students to refrain from reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

###