

# The Forgotten Oath of Congress

According to my online dictionary, an oath is “a solemn promise, often invoking a divine witness, regarding one’s future action or behavior.”

Oaths play a big role in our society. The Boy Scouts, known today as Scouts BSA since admitting girls to the organization, begin their weekly meetings by raising their right hand in the Scout sign and reciting the Boy Scout Oath. A bride and groom typically exchange vows with each other during their wedding. To receive security clearance, certain members of our government must sign an oath stating they will not divulge secrets or restricted information to others.

And then there’s our Congress.

They take the following oath, yet given recent actions, one has to wonder how seriously they take this solemn promise:

*I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter: So help me God.*

Online, the United States Senate [gives a brief history of this solemn oath](#), explaining that while it can be traced to the early days of the Republic, “the current oath is a product of the 1860s, drafted by Civil War-era members of Congress intent on ensnaring traitors.” Federal employees, judges, and incoming vice-presidents take this same oath.

The president also takes an [oath](#), prescribed in Article II, Section 1 of our Constitution:

*I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.*

Likewise, all United States military personnel take an [oath](#) when they enlist or re-enlist:

*I, (Name,) do solemnly swear or (affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.*

In states like Virginia and California, our governors take similar oaths, promising to support or defend the United States Constitution as well as the Constitution of their particular state.

All of these oaths share one commonality: the defense of the Constitution of the United States of America.

I have known members of the military who hold their oath in high regard, as the heart of their service to their country. I also once knew a federal civil servant, now long deceased, for whom his oath was the True North on the compass of how to perform his job.

Though I'm certain many of our elected officials and judges take their pledges just as seriously, our present circumstances leave me wondering about those who either ignore their duty to defend the Constitution, or who seem intent on evading that document altogether. From some of our judges to

members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, and from some of our governors to upper-level federal officials, we find many who have failed to protect our Constitution and our liberties.

How, for example, do you take such an oath, yet work with groups who want to [radically transform](#) the government of the United States? How do you reconcile your oath with sitting on your hands in Congress and keeping silent because you're afraid of offending people or losing your next election? How do you support and defend the Constitution by staying mum while others, Democrats and Republicans alike, are abusing their power? Having taken this oath, how can you then watch without protest as your colleagues cut deals with foreign powers or abet them in our own government?

Here's a thought.

The next election season will roll around before we know it. Various candidates will hold town halls, meet with voters at rallies, and give interviews on both local and national television.

Instead of first asking them what they'll do about jobs or student debt or our failing schools, or worst of all, what they'll do for us, let's ask them this question: "How do you propose to defend the Constitution of the United States?" or better yet, "What are the duties enumerated in the Constitution regarding your office?" If the candidates are running for Congress, we might then ask if they know the first two amendments in the Bill of Rights and how they propose to defend those rights.

Let's see what they say.

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