

of our system. And, it's also the heart of what makes your Oath sacred – that you are pledging your loyalty to all that the Constitution represents – We the People.

Against All Enemies, Foreign and Domestic

This phrase was added in 1862 as a direct result of the Civil War- specifically, to address the possibility of Union soldiers joining the Confederacy – that is, officers who had previously sworn their allegiance to the United States and were now fighting against it.

Today, in the post 9/11 world that we live in this language is equally applicable. Our Service is under the Department of Homeland Security – our duty is to protect those on the sea, protect our homeland against threats from the sea, and to protect the sea itself – today's threats are often domestic threats. Thus, you must be ever-vigilant and be *Semper Paratus* as you protect and defend our homeland.

That I Will Bear True Faith and Allegiance to the Same

The phrase *faith and allegiance* dates back to 1606, when King James required an oath of “uttermost faith and allegiance to the King's majesty” from everyone leaving for America to work in the Virginia Company.

In exchange for the limitless opportunity you are given in this country, you have a responsibility to “bear true faith and allegiance” to our Nation.

That I Take This Obligation Freely, without Any Mental Reservation or Purpose of Evasion

This passage originated during the Civil War. Congress and President Abraham Lincoln, wanting to ensure that soldiers did not defect, expanded the oath in an attempt to guarantee loyalty. Loyalty is about Honor. Who Lives Here Reveres Honor, Honors Duty. And, as you know Honor is the first of our three Coast Guard core values, Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty.

And That I Will Well and Faithfully Discharge the Duties of the Office on Which I Am about to Enter

This wording has its genesis in the first statute of 1789.

This clause epitomizes the Coast Guard's third core value – “Devotion to Duty.” You must always strive to perform your duties to the best of your abilities.

So Help Me God

To some, this is the most important phrase in the sacred oath. Although the Constitution does not include the phrase *so help me God* in the President's oath, our first President, George Washington, added these words when he took the first oath. In God We Trust is on our currency. We are a Nation Under one God as stated in our Pledge of Allegiance.

The President traditionally ends his speeches with God Bless America. And, thus it's no coincidence that “So Help Me God” is how you end your oath.

Uttering the words, “So help me God,” however, does not require you to assume any type of religious or other obligation. Rather, these words charge you to carry out your duties in

good faith. However, for those of faith, and certainly our founding fathers, uttering the words “So help me God” symbolizes that this oath is the most solemn of commitments.

So – the Oath is Sacred – that's Rule # 1, and now you know some of the reasons why...

Your commission is timeless.

Take a look at the commission of the first Coast Guard Officer – Hopley Yeaton – signed by George Washington as President, and Thomas Jefferson as Secretary of State.

Now, take a look at my commission – signed by Barrack Obama as President, and Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State.

Despite the passage of over two centuries – and 220 plus years – the language remains virtually unaltered. It's timeless.

Your commission is the sacred scroll that sets forth that the President, on behalf of the American people, reposes “special trust and confidence” in your patriotism, valor, fidelity and abilities.

Your commission confers your rank and authority. It orders all those of lesser grades to obey you.

By your commission, and the historic words “Know ye that Reposing Special Trust and Confidence in you,” the President is certifying that you are different than your fellow citizens. And, precisely because of this difference, you are granted special authority and privileges. In return, your devotion to duty, and to our Nation must be absolute.

With your commission, the American people are entrusting their leadership, safety and freedom – their very blood and treasure – to you. You have an awesome responsibility to bear. As an officer, it will be you who are entrusted with leading and protecting their sons and daughters when they are called to go into harm's way. There's no greater responsibility.

In many ways, giving a commission – with such unmitigated responsibility – to a brand new Ensign is a giant leap of faith. You have limited experience. You're young. You still have much to learn – and learning involves making mistakes – and learning from them.