

# Promises, Oaths, and Vows

by

Phil Rasmussen

The study of constitutional law, deals with the interpretation, implementation, and amendment of our US Constitution. With issues that come before the Supreme Court it is necessary to reference the original “constitution” whether it be federal or state. This means that we must interpret whatever issue is before the court with respect to the language and word interpretations of the time when the constitution was written. For example the meaning of “intercourse” has changed over time. [Grammarist.com](http://Grammarist.com) details its definition and what it means today:

The traditional definitions of **intercourse** are (1) *communication or exchange between countries*, and (2) *frequent or habitual intercommunication between people or things*. But while these senses live on, the word now most often refers to sexual intercourse, even where the modifier *sexual* is absent. To use the word in its other senses, you have to make it obvious that you are talking about some other kind of intercourse, either by preceding the word with a modifier other than *sexual* (e.g., *social intercourse*, *commercial intercourse*) or by immediately making clear that the intercourse is between nonhuman things (e.g., *intercourse between countries*, *intercourse between computers*).

Similarly the definitions for “converse” and “conversation” have also changed over time.

You may be asking, “Why is this important to know?” Overall, we have become lackadaisical in our use of the English language. We rarely seek the “right” word for what we want to describe, and the political correctness movement hasn’t helped in our effort to clearly communicate our thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

This is so clearly experienced when we reference the three words of this commentary’s title. The laziness in maintaining the definition of each word has led to incorrect usage and acceptance that all three mean essentially the same. To complicate matters further, each word has overlapping synonyms.

While on the surface these three terms – promises, oaths, and vows – appear to be similar or some may even think their meanings are the same. There is a distinct difference between each term. In a nutshell here is what each means:

<b>Promise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A declaration or assurance that one will do a particular thing</li> <li>• A pledge to do something</li> <li>• Has no legal standing</li> </ul>
<b>Oath</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A promise made before institutional authority</li> <li>• A person declares to accomplish something</li> <li>• A person is required to answer for the declaration</li> <li>• A commitment bound by life and honor</li> <li>• Assumes an obligation and is liable to prosecution..</li> <li>• Taking an oath places the person's life at risk.</li> </ul>
<b>Vow</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A personal promise</li> <li>• A person dedicates himself completely to a task</li> <li>• Whether fulfilled or not vows have no legal standing but rather hinges on the person governing the giving and receiving. Nothing is given that is found unacceptable, and nothing is accepted that cannot be given.</li> </ul>

Another term also plays into these definitions – covenant. Unlike the terms above, a covenant is a formal agreement between two or more parties. Covenants consist of the obligations between the parties involved and have legal standing.

Now that we have a better understanding of the four terms above, let's look at some "oaths."

Generally speaking the first "oath" a person encounters is that of the Boy or Girl Scouts.

<b>Boy Scouts oath</b>	On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.
<b>Girl Scouts promise</b>	On my honor, I will try: To serve God and my country, To help people at all times, And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

While the Boy Scouts reference the above as an oath, both "oaths" are actually promises and not oaths. Similarly the 4H organization and other youth organizations have pledges or promises that the members strive to achieve or maintain.

Once a child comes of age, they are subjected to various promises, oaths, and vows. Promises and vows are a normal aspect of every person's life. Typically they are found in marriage vows and religious promises.

Actual oaths however are generally found in government or certain occupational environments. One of the oldest binding oaths is the **Hippocratic Oath**. Over time the oaths undergo change to adopt of "modern" times. While the Hippocratic oath has undergone significant changes in recent decades the underlying principles have held firm.

The **U.S. Constitution** is an amazing document which has guided our nation for more than 200 years. It is the oldest codified constitution in the world and in Article 6, it addresses the oaths that politicians are to take before assuming their office.

*"The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States."*

**U.S. Constitution, Article VI, clause 3**

### **Office for the Presidency**

*–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.*

### **US Senate/House**

*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.*

### **Enlisted Military Personnel**

*"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; 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 regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God."*

## Commissioned Military Officers

*"I, \_\_\_\_\_ (SSAN), having been appointed an officer in the Army of the United States, as indicated above in the grade of \_\_\_\_\_ 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 upon which I am about to enter; So help me God."*

## Law Enforcement Officers

Many federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies require their officers to take a two part oath. The wording may be slightly different. The first part of their oath includes wording similar to: *"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.."* along with their state constitution, laws and agency's jurisdiction.

The second part of their oath generally includes their responsibility to ensure the safety and quality of life of the communities they serve, and to maintain a code of ethics similar to that below:

*"On my honor, I will never betray my integrity, my character or the public trust. I will always have the courage to hold myself and others accountable for our actions. I will always maintain the highest ethical standards and uphold the values of my community, and the agency I serve."*

**International Association of Chiefs of Police**

Common to almost all oaths are three (3) major, legally binding elements:

1. ***"[I] do solemnly swear. . ."***
2. ***"[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. . ."***
3. **None of the oaths have any "time limits." This means that once taken, the oath is for life, not just for when the person is in "office." The oath becomes even stronger with renewed enlistments, contracts, or reelections.**

It is time for our politicians at all levels of government to seriously embrace their oaths. This is especially true of Biden who has repeatedly sworn to support and defend our

constitution. Similarly those in Congress and ALL other branches of government need to stop their wokeness and start upholding and support the laws of our great nation.

We need to **DEMAND** an ethical government that. . .

**Is free of foreign influence in our political, economic, and social structures.**

**Puts the concerns of American citizens before those who illegally enter our country**

**Secures our borders from all illegal activities**

**Destroys the cartels actively engaged in human and drug trafficking.**

**Breaks the economic stranglehold that China has on the US**

**Secures energy independence**

**Stops the pork barreling of our bills and laws**

**Recognizes that it is the people who govern and not the government**