






# Colorado

-  [Suggestions](#)
-  [Report broken link](#)
-  [Recommend page](#)

## Colorado State Motto

<i>Nil Sine Numine</i>	<b>Language:</b> Latin
<b>Translation:</b> Nothing Without the Deity	<b>Originator:</b> Territorial Governor William Gilpin, 1861

### What is a motto?

*Merriam-Webster Online* [defines motto](#) in this way:

Main Entry: **mot·to**  
Pronunciation: 'mä-( )tO  
Function: *noun*  
Inflected Form(s): plural **mottoes** also **mottos**  
Etymology: Italian, from Late Latin *muttum* grunt, from Latin *muttire* to mutter  
1 : a sentence, phrase, or word inscribed on something as appropriate to or indicative of its character or use  
2 : a short expression of a guiding principle

State mottoes may be said to reflect the character and beliefs of the citizens of the state, or more accurately, the citizens of the state when they were adopted. State mottoes can help us gain insight into the history of a state.

### Adoption of the Colorado State Motto

After the United States Congress passed a bill making Colorado a territory in 1861, it was important that a unique seal be designed to represent the territory on all official documents. Colorado's first Territorial Governor, William Gilpin, entrusted the design of the new seal to the Secretary of the Territory, L. C. Weld instructing Weld to return to him with a rough draft.

Governor Gilpin seems to have approved the design that Weld brought to him but thought that a suitable motto should also be incorporated. The story goes that Weld responded to Governor Gilpin, "Well, Governor, what would you suggest?"

Governor Gilpin is said to have paused in thought for a moment and then responded "Nil Sine Numine."

On November 6, 1861, by Joint Resolution, the First Territorial Assembly adopted the Territorial Seal and with it, the motto, *Nil Sine Numine*. The Territorial Seal was adopted as the Colorado State Seal by the First General Assembly of Colorado on March 15, 1877.

### About the Colorado State Motto

- || [HOME](#)
- || [INTRO](#)
- || [SYMBOLS](#)
- || [ALMANAC](#)
- || [GEOGRAPHY](#)
- || [STATE MAPS](#)
- || [PEOPLE](#)
- || [GOVERNMENT](#)
- || [STATE FORUM](#)
- || [NEWSPAPERS](#)
- || [COOL SCHOOLS](#)
- || [STATE QUIZ](#)
- || [BOOK STORE](#)
- || [MARKETPLACE](#)
- || [STATE LINKS](#)
- || [NETSTATE.STORE](#)
- || [NETSTATE.MALL](#)
- || [GUESTBOOK](#)
- || [WEBMASTER](#)

The Latin phrase, *Nil Sine Numine*, appears to be an adaptation from Virgil's *Aeneid* where in Book II, line 777 the words ".....non haec sine numine devûm Eveniunt." are found.

*Nil Sine Numine* is commonly translated as "Nothing Without Providence" but this is not the translation that was intended by the originators of the resolution that adopted the seal in 1861. The Colorado Department of Personnel and Administration says this about the translation of the motto:

At recurring intervals, discussion has ensued concerning interpretation of this Latin phrase which commonly translated is "Nothing without Providence". Others say it is "Nothing without God". In the early mining days of the State, the unregenerate said it meant "nothing without a new mine". In a strict sense, one cannot possibly get "God" from "numine", God being a purely Anglo-Saxon word. The word "numine" means any divinity, god or goddess. The best evidence of intent of Colorado's official designers and framers of the resolution for adoption of the seal is contained in the committee report wherein clear distinction was made between "numine" and "Deo" and it is specifically states that the committee's interpretative translation was "Nothing without the Deity".

## **The Colorado Statutes**

The following information is excerpted from the Colorado Statutes, Title 24, Article 80, Part 9, Section 24-80-901. This statute describes the Colorado State Seal. The motto is specified within this description.

TITLE 24 GOVERNMENT - STATE : STATE HISTORY, ARCHIVES, AND EMBLEMS.  
ARTICLE 80 STATE HISTORY, ARCHIVES, AND EMBLEMS.  
PART 9 STATE EMBLEMS AND SYMBOLS.

### **24-80-901. Size and description of seal.**

The seal of the state shall be two and one-half inches in diameter, with the following device inscribed thereon: An heraldic shield bearing in chief, or upon the upper portion of the same, upon a red ground three snow-capped mountains; above surrounding clouds; upon the lower part thereof upon a golden ground a miner's badge, as prescribed by the rules of heraldry; as a crest above the shield, the eye of God, being golden rays proceeding from the lines of a triangle; below the crest and above the shield, as a scroll, the Roman fasces bearing upon a band of red, white, and blue the words, "Union and Constitution"; below the whole the motto, "Nil Sine Numine"; the whole to be surrounded by the words, "State of Colorado", and the figures "1876".

**Source:** G.L. § 2422. G.S. § 3117. R.S. 08: § 6291. C.L. § 486. CSA: C. 152, § 1. CRS 53: § 131-8-1. C.R.S. 1963: § 131-8-1.

## **Additional Information**

[State Motto List](#): List of all of the state mottoes.

[William Gilpin](#): Brief introduction to the Colorado's first Territorial Governor, William Gilpin from PBS.

[State Names, Seals, Flags, and Symbols](#): A Historical Guide, Third Edition - Benjamin F. Shearer and Barbara S. Shearer, Greenwood Press, 2002

[State Names, Flags, Seals, Songs, Birds, Flowers and Other Symbols](#): A Study based on historical documents giving the origin and significance of the state names, nicknames, mottoes, seals, flowers, birds, songs, and descriptive comments on the capitol buildings and on some of the leading state histories, Revised Edition - George Earlie Shankle, Ph.D., The H.W. Wilson Company, 1938 (Reprint Services Corp. 1971)

---

**Source:** Colorado Department of Personnel and Administration, (<http://198.187.128.12/colorado/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=fs-main.htm&2.0>), March 11, 2005

**Source:** Matthew Bender & Company, Inc., (<http://198.187.128.12/colorado/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=fs-main.htm&2.0>), March 11, 2005

**Source:** Merriam-Webster Online, (<http://www.m-w.com/>), March 3, 2005

**Source:** [State Names, Seals, Flags, and Symbols](#): A Historical Guide, Third Edition - Benjamin F. Shearer and Barbara S. Shearer, Greenwood Press, 2002

**Source:** [State Names, Flags, Seals, Songs, Birds, Flowers and Other Symbols](#): Revised Edition (Reprint)- George Earlie Shankle, Ph.D., The H.W. Wilson Company, 1938

< CA



CT >

[HOME](#) || [INTRO](#) || [SYMBOLS](#) || [ALMANAC](#) || [GEOGRAPHY](#) || [STATE MAPS](#) || [PEOPLE](#) || [GOVERNMENT](#)  
[FORUM](#) || [NEWSPAPERS](#) || [COOL SCHOOLS](#) || [STATE QUIZ](#) || [BOOK STORE](#) || [MARKETPLACE](#) || [STATE LINKS](#)  
[NETSTATE.STORE](#) || [NETSTATE.MALL](#) || [GUESTBOOK](#) || [WEBMASTER](#)

Site designed exclusively for NETSTATE.COM by [NSTATE](#)



This page last updated: March 24, 2005  
NETSTATE.COM is a Trademark of NSTATE, LLC.  
Copyright © 2005 by NSTATE, LLC. All rights reserved.  
No copyright is claimed on non-original or licensed material.

[Support NETSTATE](#)

[Top](#)