

1 SB14
2 196775-1
3 By Senator Melson
4 RFD: Education Policy
5 First Read: 05-MAR-19
6 PFD: 01/23/2019

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8 SYNOPSIS: This bill would allow public schools to
9 offer elective courses focusing on the study of the
10 Bible in grades six to 12. This bill would also
11 allow public schools to display artifacts,
12 monuments, symbols, and texts related to the study
13 of the Bible if displaying these items is
14 appropriate to the overall educational purpose of
15 the course, and would require the State Board of
16 Education to adopt rules and policies to implement
17 the requirements of the bill.

18
19 A BILL
20 TO BE ENTITLED
21 AN ACT
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23 Relating to education; to allow public schools to
24 offer elective courses focusing on the study of the Bible in
25 grades six to 12; to allow public schools to display
26 artifacts, monuments, symbols, and texts related to the study
27 of the Bible if displaying these items is appropriate to the

1 overall educational purpose of the course; and to require the
2 State Board of Education to adopt rules and policies to
3 implement the requirements of the bill.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

5 Section 1. (a) A public school may offer elective
6 courses in the study of the Bible in grades six to 12,
7 inclusive, as follows:

8 (1) A social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures
9 of the Old Testament of the Bible.

10 (2) A social studies course on the New Testament of
11 the Bible.

12 (3) A social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures
13 and the New Testament of the Bible.

14 (b) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules
15 and policies necessary for implementing the requirements of
16 this act.

17 Section 2. (a) Elective courses offered pursuant to
18 this act shall be designed to do all of the following:

19 (1) Teach students about Bible characters, poetry,
20 and narratives that are useful for understanding history and
21 contemporary society and culture, including art, music, social
22 mores, oration, and public policy.

23 (2) Familiarize students with the following:

24 a. The contents of the Bible.

25 b. The history of the Bible.

26 c. The literary style and structure of the Bible.

1 d. The influence of the Bible on law, history,
2 government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values,
3 and cultures.

4 (b) A teacher of a course offered pursuant to this
5 act shall comply with applicable law and all federal and state
6 guidelines regarding maintaining religious neutrality and
7 accommodating the diverse religious views, traditions, and
8 perspectives of students in the school.

9 (c) A teacher of a course offered pursuant to this
10 act may not endorse, favor, promote, disfavor, or show
11 hostility toward any particular religion or nonreligious faith
12 or religious perspective.

13 (d) The State Board of Education, in complying with
14 this section, may not violate the United States Constitution,
15 federal law, the Constitution of Alabama of 1901, state law,
16 or any administrative rule or regulation of the United States
17 Department of Education or the State Board of Education.

18 (e) A school principal may authorize the display of
19 historic artifacts, monuments, symbols, and texts including,
20 but not limited to, religious materials, if they are displayed
21 in conjunction with a course of study that includes an
22 elective course in history, civilization, ethics, comparative
23 religion, literature, or other subject area that uses the
24 artifacts, monuments, symbols, and texts as instructional
25 material, as long as the display is appropriate to the overall
26 educational purpose of the course.

1 Section 3. This act shall become effective on the
2 first day of the third month following its passage and
3 approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.

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3 SENATE EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE AMENDMENT #1 TO SB14
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8 On page 4, line 1, insert the following as Sections
9 3 and 4 and renumber the subsequent section accordingly:

10 "Section 3. No teacher shall be required to teach
11 any course under this section and, any provision of the law to
12 the contrary notwithstanding, no teacher shall be subject
13 to any retaliation whatsoever for declining to teach such a
14 course, including, but not limited to, non-renewal of
15 contract, termination, transfer, reassignment, loss of
16 extracurricular activity assignments, reassignment of planning
17 period, or reduction of evaluation score."

18 "Section 4. The Attorney General shall defend any
19 litigation filed against any local board of education in the
20 state or any officer, employee, or agent thereof based upon
21 the board's actions in implementing this act without cost to
22 the local board of education. Should any local board of
23 education be ordered to pay any fine, court cost, or
24 attorneys' fees following such litigation, the Legislature
25 shall appropriate funds for that purpose separate and apart
26 from any other budget allocation."

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3 SENATE EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE AMENDMENT #2 TO SB14

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8 On page 3, after Section 2(e), add section 2(f) and
9 insert the following language:

10 (f) The local board of education shall incur no
11 liability and is immune from any liability exposure created by
12 this act.