

1 SB14
2 202111-2
3 By Senator Melson
4 RFD: Education Policy
5 First Read: 05-MAR-19
6 PFD: 01/23/2019

1 SB14

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4 ENROLLED, An Act,

5 Relating to education; to allow public schools to
6 offer elective courses focusing on the study of the Bible and
7 religious history in grades six to 12; to allow public schools
8 to display artifacts, monuments, symbols, and texts related to
9 the study of the Bible and religious history if displaying
10 these items is appropriate to the overall educational purpose
11 of the course; and to require the State Board of Education to
12 adopt rules and policies to implement the requirements of the
13 bill.

14 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

15 Section 1. (a) A public school may offer elective
16 courses in the objective study of the Bible and religious
17 history in grades six to 12, inclusive, as follows:

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

20 (2) A social studies course on the Greek Scriptures
21 of the New Testament of the Bible.

22 (3) A social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures
23 of the Old Testament and the Greek Scriptures of the New
24 Testament of the Bible.

25 (4) A social studies course in religious history.

1 (b) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules
2 and policies necessary for implementing the requirements of
3 this act, including a requirement that curriculum standards
4 submitted by a public school or school district for approval
5 of an elective study of the Bible course shall meet the
6 academic rigor and curriculum standards of other elective
7 courses approved by the board.

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

10 (1) Teach students about Bible characters, poetry,
11 and narratives that are useful for understanding history and
12 contemporary society and culture, including art, music, social
13 mores, oration, and public policy.

14 (2) Familiarize students with the following:

15 a. The contents of the Bible and religious history.

16 b. The history of the Bible and religious history.

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

18 d. The influence of the Bible on law, history,
19 government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values,
20 and cultures.

21 (b) A teacher of a course offered pursuant to this
22 act shall comply with applicable law and all federal and state
23 guidelines regarding maintaining religious neutrality and
24 accommodating the diverse religious views, traditions, and
25 perspectives of students in the school.

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

5 (d) The State Board of Education, in complying with
6 this section, may not violate the United States Constitution,
7 federal law, the Constitution of Alabama of 1901, state law,
8 or any administrative rule or regulation of the United States
9 Department of Education or the State Board of Education.

10 (e) A school principal may authorize the display of
11 historic artifacts, monuments, symbols, and texts including,
12 but not limited to, religious materials, if they are displayed
13 in conjunction with a course of study that includes an
14 elective course in history, civilization, ethics, comparative
15 religion, literature, or other subject area that uses the
16 artifacts, monuments, symbols, and texts as instructional
17 material, as long as the display is appropriate to the overall
18 educational purpose of the course and is displayed only
19 throughout the duration of the course.

20 (f) The local board of education shall incur no
21 liability and is immune from any liability exposure created by
22 this act.

23 Section 3. No teacher shall be required to teach any
24 course under this section and, any provision of the law to the
25 contrary to notwithstanding, no teacher shall be subject to

1 any retaliation whatsoever for declining to teach such a
2 course, including, but not limited to, non-renewal of
3 contract, termination, transfer, reassignment, loss of
4 extracurricular activity assignments, reassignment of planning
5 period, or reduction of evaluation score.

6 Section 4. The Attorney General shall defend any
7 litigation filed against any local board of education in the
8 state or any officer, employee, or agent thereof based upon
9 the board's actions in implementing this act without cost to
10 the local board of education. Should any local board of
11 education be ordered to pay any fine, court cost, or
12 attorneys' fees following such litigation, the Legislature
13 shall appropriate funds for that purpose separate and apart
14 from any other budget allocation.

15 Section 5. This act shall become effective on the
16 first day of the third month following its passage and
17 approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.

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President and Presiding Officer of the Senate

Speaker of the House of Representatives

SB14
Senate 02-APR-19
I hereby certify that the within Act originated in and passed
the Senate, as amended.

Senate 30-MAY-19
I hereby certify that the within Act originated in and passed
the Senate, as amended by Conference Committee Report.

Patrick Harris,
Secretary.

House of Representatives
Passed: 23-MAY-19, as amended
House of Representatives
Passed: 30-MAY-2019, as amended by Conference Committee
Report.

By: Senator Melson