

Senate Bill 501

By: Senators Harbin of the 16th, Robertson of the 29th, Burns of the 23rd, Harbison of the 15th, Goodman of the 8th and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 19A of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
2 relating to American history recognition and significant documents, so as to authorize public
3 elementary and secondary schools to display the Ten Commandments; to provide for the
4 display of the Ten Commandments in each public elementary and secondary school
5 classroom in this state, subject to appropriation by the General Assembly or other available
6 funding; to provide for specifications for such displays; to authorize the expenditure of public
7 funds for the purchase of such displays; to provide for an effective date; to provide for related
8 matters; to provide for a short title; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

10 **SECTION 1.**

11 This Act shall be known and may be cited as the "Foundations of Law Act."

12 **SECTION 2.**

13 Article 19A of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
14 American history recognition and significant documents, is amended by revising subsection

15 (a) of Code Section 20-2-1021, relating to display of historically significant documents, as
16 follows:

17 "(a) To increase student understanding of, and familiarity with, American historical
18 documents, public schools may display historically important excerpts from, or copies of,
19 those documents in school classrooms and common areas as appropriate. Local boards of
20 education and charter schools are strongly encouraged to allow and may encourage any
21 public school teacher or administrator to read or post in a public school building,
22 classroom, or event excerpts or portions of writings, documents, records, or images that
23 reflect the history of the United States, including, but not limited to:

- 24 (1) The Preamble to the Georgia Constitution;
- 25 (2) The Declaration of Independence;
- 26 (3) The United States Constitution, with emphasis on the 13th, 14th, and 15th
27 Amendments;
- 28 (4) The Bill of Rights;
- 29 (5) The Mayflower Compact;
- 30 (6) The national motto;
- 31 (7) The Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag;
- 32 (7.1) The Pledge of Allegiance to the Georgia flag;
- 33 (8) The National Anthem;
- 34 (9) The writings, speeches, documents, and proclamations of the Founding Fathers and
35 Presidents of the United States;
- 36 ~~(9.1)~~(10) The Emancipation Proclamation;
- 37 ~~(9.2)~~(11) The Gettysburg Address;
- 38 (12) The Ten Commandments;
- 39 ~~(10)~~(13) Decisions of the United States Supreme Court; and
- 40 ~~(11)~~(14) Acts of the Congress of the United States, including the published text of the
41 Congressional Record."

SECTION 3.

42
43 Said article is further amended by redesignating subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-1021,
44 relating to display of historically significant documents, as subsection (c) and by adding a
45 new subsection to read as follows:

46 "(b)(1) Each public elementary and secondary school in this state shall be authorized to
47 display in a conspicuous place in each classroom of the school a durable poster or framed
48 copy of the Ten Commandments that meets the requirements of paragraph (2) of this
49 subsection.

50 (2) A poster or framed copy of the Ten Commandments, as authorized in paragraph (1)
51 of this subsection, shall:

52 (A) Be at least 16 inches wide and 20 inches tall; and

53 (B) Include the following text, in a size and typeface that is legible to a person with
54 average vision from anywhere in the classroom in which the poster or framed copy is
55 displayed:

56 'The Ten Commandments

57 I AM the LORD thy God.

58 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

59 Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven images.

60 Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.

61 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

62 Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land
63 which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

64 Thou shalt not kill.

65 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

66 Thou shalt not steal.

67 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

68 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.

69 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his
70 maidservant, nor his cattle, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.'

71 (3) A public elementary or secondary school in which each classroom does not include
72 a poster or framed copy of the Ten Commandments as authorized in paragraph (1) of this
73 subsection may accept any offer of a privately donated poster or framed copy of the Ten
74 Commandments and display such poster or framed copy; provided, however, that such
75 poster or framed copy:

76 (A) Meets the requirements of paragraph (2) of this subsection; and

77 (B) Does not contain any additional content.

78 (4) If a public elementary or secondary school has a poster or framed copy of the Ten
79 Commandments in any classroom that does not meet the requirements of paragraph (2)
80 of this subsection, such school may replace the posters or copies with posters or copies
81 that meet such requirements using public funds or by accepting a private donation.

82 (5) The provisions of this subsection shall be subject to appropriation by the General
83 Assembly or the availability of other funds for such purpose."

84 **SECTION 4.**

85 This Act shall become effective upon its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law
86 without such approval.

87 **SECTION 5.**

88 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.