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3 CONFERENCE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR SB14
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9 A BILL
10 TO BE ENTITLED
11 AN ACT
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13 Relating to education; to allow public schools to
14 offer elective courses focusing on the study of the Bible and
15 religious history in grades six to 12; to allow public schools
16 to display artifacts, monuments, symbols, and texts related to
17 the study of the Bible and religious history if displaying
18 these items is appropriate to the overall educational purpose
19 of the course; and to require the State Board of Education to
20 adopt rules and policies to implement the requirements of the
21 bill.

22 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

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

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

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

3 (3) A social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures
4 of the Old Testament and the Greek Scriptures of the New
5 Testament of the Bible.

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

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

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

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

20 (2) Familiarize students with the following:

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

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

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

24 d. The influence of the Bible on law, history,
25 government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values,
26 and cultures.

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

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

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

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

25 (f) The local board of education shall incur no
26 liability and is immune from any liability exposure created by
27 this act.

1 Section 3. No teacher shall be required to teach any
2 course under this section and, any provision of the law to the
3 contrary to notwithstanding, no teacher shall be subject to
4 any retaliation whatsoever for declining to teach such a
5 course, including, but not limited to, non-renewal of
6 contract, termination, transfer, reassignment, loss of
7 extracurricular activity assignments, reassignment of planning
8 period, or reduction of evaluation score.

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

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