

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

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4 ENGROSSED

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7 A BILL  
8 TO BE ENTITLED  
9 AN ACT

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

20 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

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

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

26 (2) A social studies course on the New Testament of  
27 the Bible.

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

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

4           (b) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules  
5 and policies necessary for implementing the requirements of  
6 this act.

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

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

13           (2) Familiarize students with the following:

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

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

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

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

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

25           (c) A teacher of a course offered pursuant to this  
26 act may not endorse, favor, promote, disfavor, or show

1 hostility toward any particular religion or nonreligious faith  
2 or religious perspective.

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

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

17 (f) The local board of education shall incur no  
18 liability and is immune from any liability exposure created by  
19 this act.

20 Section 3. No teacher shall be required to teach any  
21 course under this section and, any provision of the law to the  
22 contrary to notwithstanding, no teacher shall be subject to  
23 any retaliation whatsoever for declining to teach such a  
24 course, including, but not limited to, non-renewal of  
25 contract, termination, transfer, reassignment, loss of  
26 extracurricular activity assignments, reassignment of planning  
27 period, or reduction of evaluation score.

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

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

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Senate

Read for the first time and referred to the Senate  
committee on Education Policy..... 05-MAR-19

Read for the second time and placed on the calen-  
dar 2 amendments..... 20-MAR-19

Read for the third time and passed as amended .... 02-APR-19

Yeas 32  
Nays 1

Patrick Harris,  
Secretary.