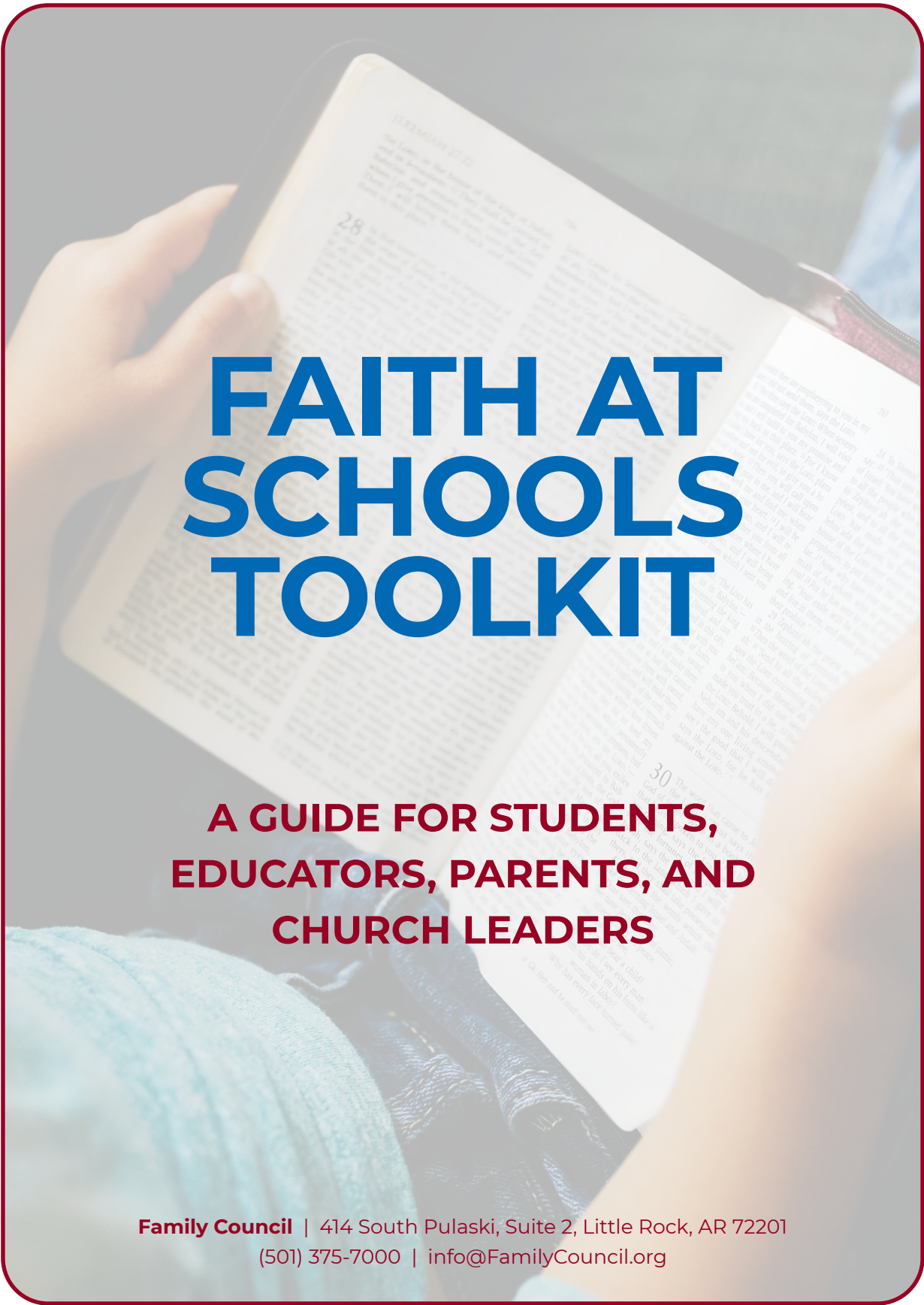


A person is shown from the chest up, holding an open Bible. The person is wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt. The Bible is open to a page with text, and the person's hands are visible holding the edges of the pages. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue. Overlaid on the image is the title 'FAITH AT SCHOOLS TOOLKIT' in large, bold, blue capital letters. Below the title is the subtitle 'A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, PARENTS, AND CHURCH LEADERS' in smaller, bold, dark red capital letters. At the bottom of the image is the contact information for Family Council, also in dark red capital letters.

FAITH AT SCHOOLS TOOLKIT

**A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS,
EDUCATORS, PARENTS, AND
CHURCH LEADERS**

Family Council | 414 South Pulaski, Suite 2, Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 375-7000 | info@FamilyCouncil.org

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Expressing Faith through Religious Freedom in Arkansas Public Schools

MAKING THE MOST OF LEGAL OPPORTUNITIES

Mission: To equip and inspire public school students to demonstrate and participate in their faith at school in a manner that is consistent with state law, court rulings, and time-honored traditions.

Goals:

1. To inform students, educators, and members of the community about opportunities designated by Arkansas law or tradition for students to express their faith at school.
2. To provide suggestions and resources about how students can demonstrate and participate in their faith at times designated by state law or tradition.
3. To provide those who are interested in seeing religious faith expressed at school with a list of organizations that can assist them.
4. To help make public school a place where religious freedom is respected and expressions of faith are welcomed and encouraged.





Dear Friends,

Students do not surrender their freedom of religion simply because they walk through the doorway of a public school building. Students can legally express their faith wherever they are, including at school. We are grateful for special religious observances at school like See You at the Pole, Bring Your Bible to School Day, laws that allow the academic study of the Bible, Released Time for off-campus religious instruction, designated days to pray for our schools, and for times when students are free to pray such as during the moment of silence each school day.

This toolkit is not intended to be a comprehensive guide for how students can express their faith in every situation at school. There are many qualified, national legal-advocacy organizations that have already published excellent guidelines and interpretations of court rulings regarding religious freedom at school. Links to their resources can be found at the back of this toolkit.

Rather, this toolkit is Arkansas-specific. Many people are unaware that in recent years the Arkansas Legislature has passed laws affirming religious freedom at school. In addition, traditional practices like See You at the Pole have become the norm at many Arkansas schools. Our goal is to draw attention to these laws and traditional practices and help students know how to take full advantage of these opportunities.

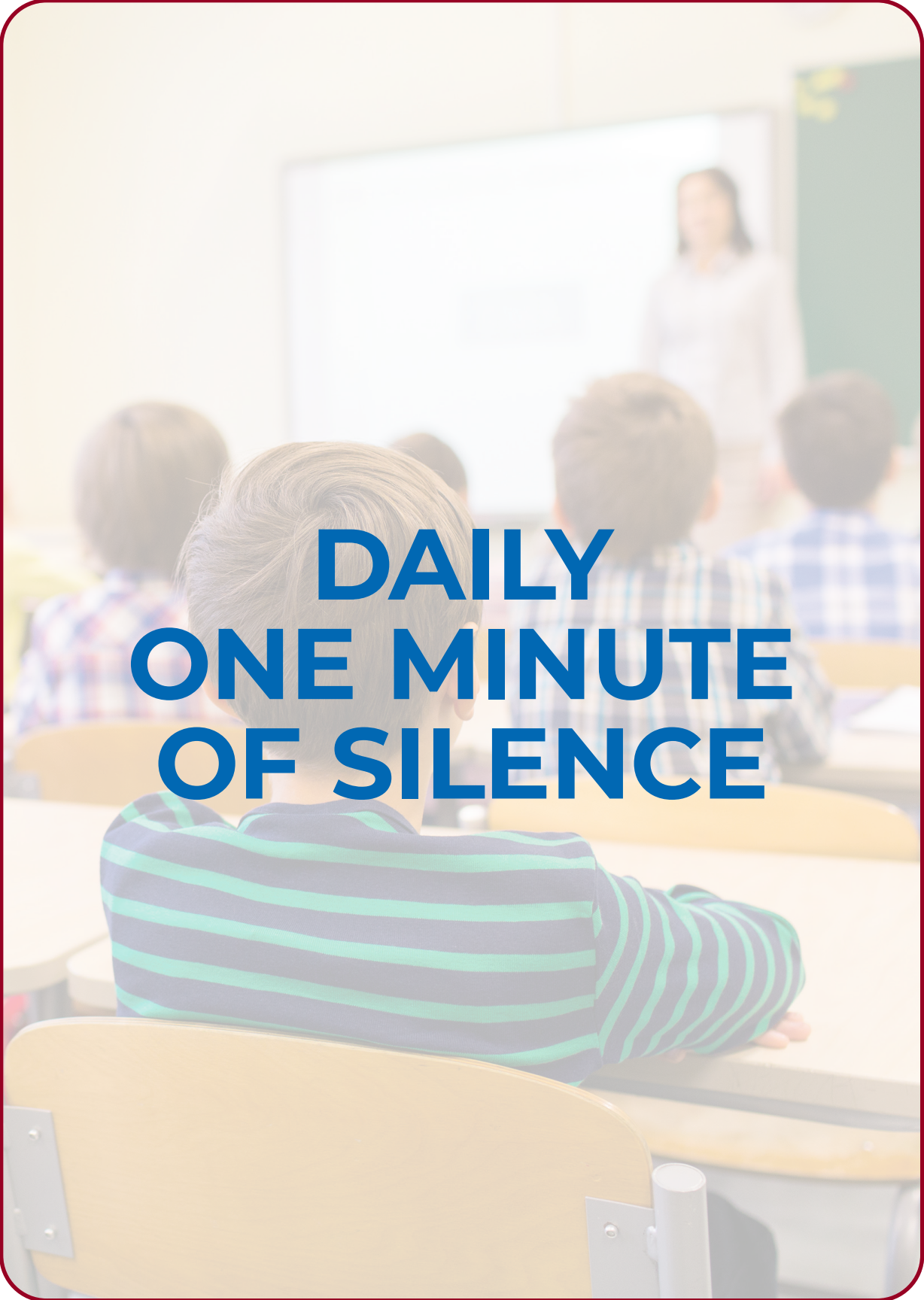
Many people have complained about court rulings banning school prayers and Bible reading. However, there is still broad legal protection for the free exercise of religion at school. Few Arkansas families are aware of how to help their students fully exercise the religious freedoms that the courts and state laws allow and encourage. We hope you and the students in your school will use this guide to facilitate greater participation in activities like:

- The Daily One Minute of Silence:
- Display of “In God We Trust” Motto
- See You at the Pole
- Bring Your Bible to School Day
- Annual Day of Prayer for Arkansas Students
- Reading or Displaying Historical Religious Quotes or Documents
- Academic Study of the Bible Courses in Public School
- National Day of Prayer
- Released Time for Religious Instruction

Thank you, and may God bless you.

Sincerely,

Jerry Cox
President



DAILY ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE

Daily One Minute of Silence

DESCRIPTION

In 2021, the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 959 requiring that public schools students observe one minute of silence each school day. Most states have passed laws pertaining to moments of silence at school.

DATE/TIME

A minute of silence is observed each day following the Pledge of Allegiance. A minute of silence is also required after the Pledge of Allegiance during after-school assemblies and at sporting events.

PURPOSE

To provide one minute for students to be silent.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During the one minute of silence each student may reflect, pray, meditate, or engage in any other silent activity that is not likely to interfere with or distract other students.

WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO

- Be sure your local public school is following state law by observing one minute of silence during the first class of the school day, immediately after the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Students can get together and make a list of things to pray for, and they can share that list with other students so everyone can silently pray for the same requests during the moment of silence.
- For publicly known community situations, students can share online and urge others to pray for those situations during the moment of silence.
- Remember that students can get together and pray silently or aloud at school at any time when students have free time to gather and speak and converse about anything else.
- Public school educators can make a copy of the law and distribute it in print, by email, or online, and post it on the school's website to remind everyone that silent prayer is one of the legal options for every student during the moment of silence.
- Any parent can make a copy of the law mandating a minute of silence and distribute it to raise awareness in the community.
- A teacher can post the law on their classroom bulletin board to encourage meaningful participation in the minute of silence by students.
- Since the law also requires one minute of silence after the Pledge of Allegiance at school sporting events, the athletes on the team could make a prayer list and share it with the student body.

HELPFUL CONTACTS

Family Council

414 South Pulaski, Suite 2
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 375-7000
info@FamilyCouncil.org

Gateways to Better Education

P.O. Box 514
Lake Forest, CA 92609
(800) 929-1163
info@gtbe.org

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE DAILY MINUTE OF SILENCE

1. Question: Does this law require a minute of silence in private schools or home schools?

Answer: No. The law only applies to public schools.

2. Question: Does the law force students to pray during the minute of silence?

Answer: No. The law says that the student may reflect, pray, meditate, or engage in any other silent activity that does not distract other students.

3. Question: Does this law force teachers or school administrators to do anything?

Answer: Yes. The teacher and school administrators must ensure that students, during the first period of the day, remain silent for one minute immediately following the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Question: Does the law require a minute of silence at any other time at school?

Answer: Yes. In addition to requiring a minute of silence after the Pledge of Allegiance during the first class of the day, a minute of silence is also required after the Pledge of Allegiance during after-school assemblies and at sporting events.

5. Question: Isn't this just a way to get prayer into public schools?

Answer: Prayer is already in every public school. Students can already pray silently at school anytime they choose. Most people would agree that it is good when a person quietly reflects, meditates, or prays in whatever way they choose.

6. Question: Can students agree to pray during the moment of silence or share a list of what to pray for?

Answer: Yes. Students can share prayer lists with one another on paper, online, or verbally at school.

7. Question: Can teachers or administrators tell students to pray or tell them what to pray for?

Answer: No.

8. Question: Doesn't this violate the separation of church and state?

Answer: No. Requiring students to be silent for one minute does not constitute state sponsorship of any religious activity.

State of Arkansas

As Engrossed: H4/6/21

93rd General Assembly

A Bill

Regular Session, 2021

HOUSE BILL 1832

By: Representatives M. Berry, Beaty Jr., Bentley, Crawford, Dotson, Haak, Speaks, Vaught, Watson,
McGrew, B. Smith, S. Smith, Slape, Hollowell, Fortner, Lundstrum, McClure, Coleman, Cloud,
Christiansen, Lowery
By: Senators J. English, B. Ballinger, *D. Wallace*

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO REQUIRE THAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS OBSERVE A
MOMENT OF SILENCE FOLLOWING THE RECITATION OF THE
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE; TO REQUIRE THAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
RECITE THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AT SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES
AND SPORTING EVENTS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO REQUIRE THAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS OBSERVE A
MOMENT OF SILENCE FOLLOWING THE DAILY
RECITATION OF THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE;
AND TO REQUIRE THAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS RECITE
THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AT SCHOOL
ASSEMBLIES AND SPORTING EVENTS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-16-108 is amended to read as follows:
6-16-108. Recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

(a) The State Board of Education shall adopt a policy to require that
~~public:~~

(1) Public school students in grades kindergarten through twelve
(K-12) participate in a daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance followed
by one (1) minute of silence during the first class of each school day; and
(2)(A) Kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12) public schools



1 lead or broadcast a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance followed by one
2 (1) minute of silence at the commencement of each school-sanctioned after-
3 school assembly and each school-sanctioned sporting event.

4 (B) However, if any part of two (2) or more school-
5 sanctioned sporting events occur on the same day at the same school, a public
6 school may choose to lead or broadcast a recitation of the Pledge of
7 Allegiance followed by one (1) minute of silence at only one (1) of the
8 school-sanctioned sporting events.

9 (b) The policy required under subsection (a) of this section shall:

10 (1) Require that at the time designated for the recitation of
11 the Pledge of Allegiance students shall stand and recite the Pledge of
12 Allegiance while facing the flag with their right hands over their hearts or
13 in an appropriate salute if in uniform;

14 (2)(A) Provide that no student shall be compelled to recite the
15 Pledge of Allegiance if the student or the student's parent or legal guardian
16 objects to the student's participating in the exercise on religious,
17 philosophical, or other grounds.

18 (B) Students who are exempt from reciting the Pledge of
19 Allegiance under subdivision (b)(2)(A) of this section shall be required to
20 remain quietly standing or sitting at their desks while others recite the
21 Pledge of Allegiance;

22 (3)(A) Provide that teachers or other school staff who have
23 religious, philosophical, or other grounds for objecting are exempt from
24 leading or participating in the exercise.

25 (B) If a teacher chooses not to lead the Pledge of
26 Allegiance, the policy shall require that another suitable person shall be
27 designated either by the teacher or principal to lead the class; and

28 (4) Require the school to provide appropriate accommodations for
29 students, teachers, or other staff who are unable to comply with the
30 procedures described in this section due to disability.

31 (5)(A) Provide for the observance of one (1) minute of silence
32 following the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

33 (B) During the one (1) minute of silence following the
34 recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, each student may reflect, pray,
35 meditate, or engage in any other silent activity that is not likely to
36 interfere with or distract another student.

1 (C) Each public school teacher or other public school
2 employee in charge of students during the period in which the Pledge of
3 Allegiance is recited and moment of silence is observed shall ensure that
4 each student remains silent and does not act in a manner that is likely to
5 interfere with or distract another student.

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7 */s/M. Berry*
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10 **APPROVED: 4/27/21**
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**DISPLAY
OF “IN GOD
WE TRUST”
MOTTO**

Display of “In God We Trust” Motto

DESCRIPTION

In 2021 the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 410, a law requiring the display of the National Motto, “In God We Trust,” in every public school classroom and in every public school library if funds are donated for the purchase of the posters or if the posters themselves are donated.

DATE/TIME

Displayed permanently in every classroom and library.

PURPOSE

To familiarize students with the motto of the United States of America, “In God We Trust.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The posting of the motto of the United States is also allowed under other laws that allow the posting of historical documents that may have a religious reference.

WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO

- See if your public school has a framed copy of the National Motto, “In God We Trust,” in every classroom and library. If not, find out why.
- Donate “In God We Trust” posters or donate enough money to the school so they can purchase them. Schools must display the posters in every classroom if the posters are donated or enough money is donated for the school to buy them.
- Organize a group of citizens who will go to all the public schools in your area and ensure that they have enough posters to place one in every classroom. Buy a large quantity of posters, frame them, and give them to the school for every classroom.
- A church, civic club, or a group of individuals can purchase the posters in large quantities, frame them, and have them ready for display. Once schools know where to get free posters, many may call.
- Teachers can discuss the “In God We Trust” poster with their students.
- Students can do research and write essays about the national motto.
- There is no law that prevents a school from purchasing and displaying an “In God We Trust” sign, poster, or banner that is much larger than the framed posters. One could be displayed in the auditorium, gym or athletic field. The motto could be on every school bus or on the school’s stationery.

HELPFUL CONTACTS

“In God We Trust” posters are available through these organizations:

An American Speaks

PO BOX 3037
Little Rock, AR 72203
(501) 725-0219
anamericanspeaks.com
toni@anamericanspeaks.com

Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation

524 Johnstown Road
Chesapeake, VA 23322
(757) 546-2190
cpcfonline.com

American Family Association

PO Drawer 2440
Tupelo, MS 38803
(877) 927-4917
resources.afa.net/in-god-we-trust-poster-40th-anniversary-edition

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT DISPLAYING THE NATIONAL MOTTO IN PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

1. Question: What does this law require?

Answer: The national motto must be displayed in every K–12 classroom and library as well as in classrooms in public colleges and universities if the posters have been donated. This law does not require the posting of the national motto unless a copy of it meets the size requirement set by law, it has been donated, or funds have been given for the school to purchase copies.

2. Question: Doesn't this violate the separation of church and state?

Answer: No. This is a motto, not a religion. This is the same motto that is on all money minted by the United States Government.

3. Question: What if this offends students or teachers who don't believe in God?

Answer: What they believe does not change the motto of the United States.

4. Question: What if a school refuses to allow the posting of the National Motto?

Answer: They are in violation of state law. The law says that if the posters are donated, the school must display them. Having the school attorney or local prosecutor explain the law to school officials would be helpful.



State of Arkansas
93rd General Assembly
Regular Session, 2021

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1654

By: Representatives Dotson, Penzo
By: Senator B. Ballinger

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO AMEND ARKANSAS LAW CONCERNING THE DISPLAY
OF THE NATIONAL MOTTO OF THE UNITED STATES, "IN GOD
WE TRUST"; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO AMEND ARKANSAS LAW CONCERNING THE
DISPLAY OF THE NATIONAL MOTTO OF THE
UNITED STATES, "IN GOD WE TRUST".

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 1-4-133 is amended to read as follows:
1-4-133. Display of national motto.

(a)(1) If funds under subsection (b) of this section are available,
local school superintendents, local building administrators, or chief
administrators of the public schools in this state, or institutions of higher
education, or their respective designees, and the administrative officials of
state agencies, or their respective designees, shall prominently display in a
conspicuous place in a location described in subdivision (a)(2) of this
section a durable poster or framed copy containing:

(A)(i) The national motto of the United States, "In God We
Trust".

(ii) The national motto shall:

(a) Be easily readable on a poster or framed
copy of at least eleven inches by fourteen inches (11" x 14");

(b) Be the central focus of the poster or



1 framed copy; and

2 (c) Be displayed in a large font size;

3 (B) An accurate representation of the United States flag,
4 which shall be under the national motto; and

5 (C) An accurate representation of the Arkansas state flag
6 or flags.

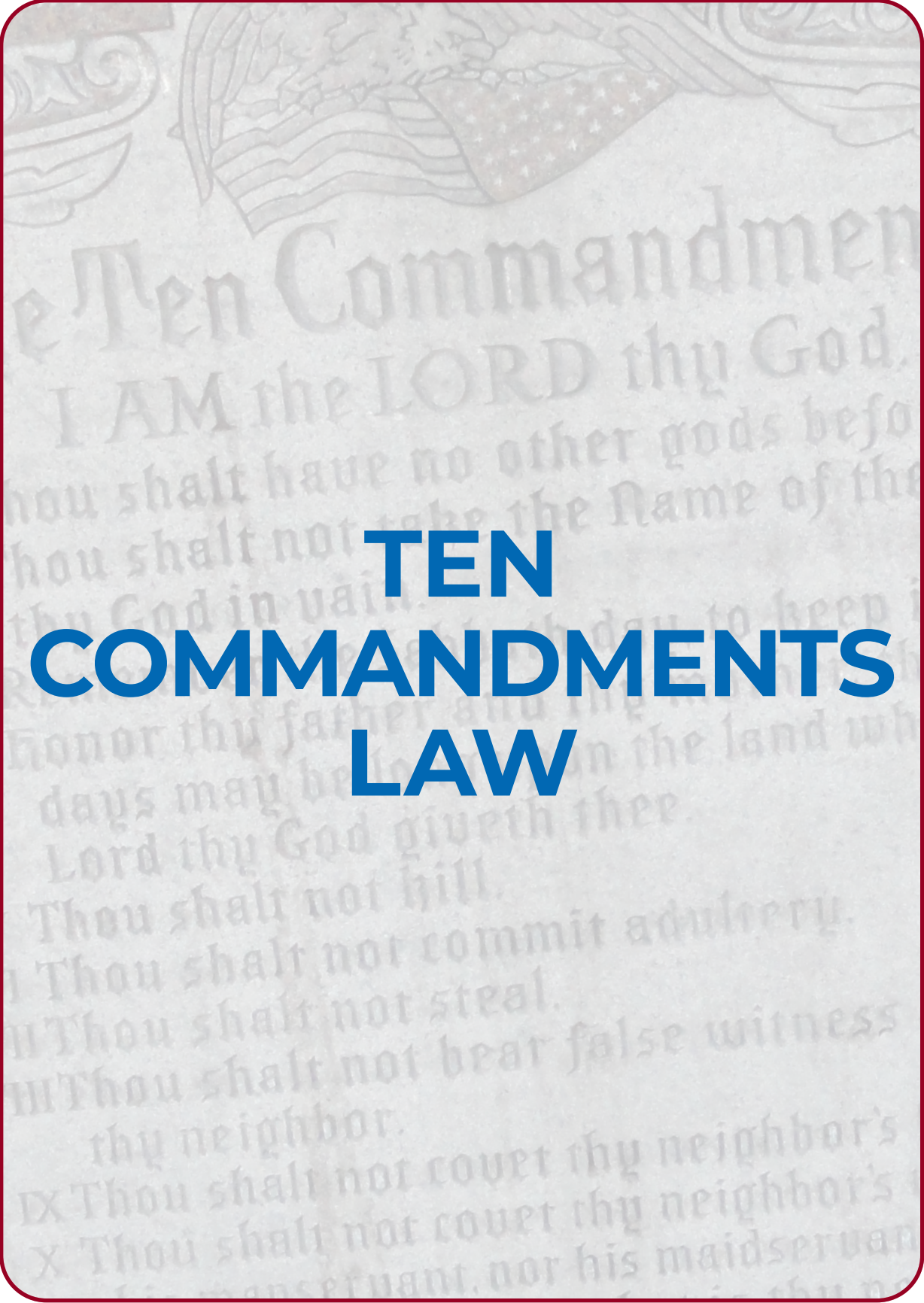
7 (2) The durable posters or framed copies donated or purchased
8 under subdivision (a)(1) of this section shall be displayed in each:

9 (A) Public institution of higher education and elementary
10 and secondary school library and classroom in this state; and

11 (B) Public building or facility in this state that is
12 maintained or operated by ~~state~~ taxpayer funds.

13 (b) The copies or posters authorized under this section shall either
14 be donated or shall be purchased solely with funds made available through
15 voluntary contributions to the local school boards, local building governing
16 entity, or the Building Authority Division.

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19 **APPROVED: 3/22/21**
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TEN COMMANDMENTS LAW

Ten Commandments Law

DESCRIPTION

In 2025 the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 573, a law placing copies of the Ten Commandments in every public school and public building in Arkansas if funds are donated for the purchase of the posters or if posters are themselves donated.

DATE/TIME

Displayed permanently in every classroom and library.

PURPOSE

To make sure Arkansas continues the longstanding tradition of recognizing the importance of the Ten Commandments, especially as one of the earliest examples of the rule of law in human history, and how they helped shape philosophy and laws in countries around the world.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The posting of the ten commandments is also allowed under other laws that allow the posting of historical documents that may have a religious reference.

WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO

- See if your public school has a ten commandments poster in every classroom and public building. If not, find out why.
- Donate “Ten Commandments” posters or donate enough money to the school so they can purchase them. Schools must display the posters in every classroom if the posters are donated or enough money is donated for the school to buy them.
- Organize a group of citizens who will go to all public schools in your area and ensure that they have enough “Ten Commandments” posters to place in every classroom. Buy a large quantity of posters and give them to the school for every classroom.
- Donate to private schools as well.
- Adopt a school through the website RestoreAmericanschools.com and order posters to place in schools. The package you receive will include a number of posters based on the number of schools you selected, bundled in sets of 30.
- A church, civic club, or a group of individuals can purchase the posters in large quantities and have them ready for display. Visit RestoreAmericanschools.com to purchase posters. You must purchase a minimum of 30 posters at \$1 a piece. This quantity can be easily shipped to you for distribution to schools that you adopt.
- Once schools know where to get free posters, many may call.

HELPFUL CONTACTS

Several organizations have come together to make ordering posters and distributing them to schools across Arkansas easier. Some of those organizations are below and you can see the others on the Restore America website.

Restore American Schools

info@restoreamericanschools.com
www.restoreamericanschools.com

First Liberty

2001 West Plano Parkway, Suite 1600
Plano, TX 75075
(972) 941-4444
firstliberty.org

Liberty Counsel

P.O. Box 540774
Orlando, FL 32854
(407) 875-1776
www.lc.org

Family Council

414 South Pulaski St., Suite 2
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 375-7000
info@familycouncil.org

American History and Heritage Foundation

P.O. Box 10388
Conway, AR 72034
501-336-0918
www.americanhistoryandheritage.org



State of Arkansas

As Engrossed: S3/17/25

95th General Assembly

A Bill

Regular Session, 2025

SENATE BILL 433

By: Senators J. Dotson, M. McKee, J. Boyd, A. Clark, Dees, K. Hammer, C. Penzo, Stone

By: Representatives A. Brown, Bentley, Breaux, N. Burkes, Long, McGrew, S. Meeks

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT REGARDING THE DISPLAY OF THE NATIONAL MOTTO
AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

REGARDING THE DISPLAY OF THE NATIONAL
MOTTO AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 1-4-133 is amended to read as follows:

1-4-133. Display of national motto – Display of the Ten Commandments.

(a)(1) If funds under subsection (b) of this section are available, local school superintendents, local government building administrators, or chief administrators of the public schools in this state, or institutions of higher education, or their respective designees, and the administrative officials of state agencies, or their respective designees, shall prominently display the following in a conspicuous place in a location described in subdivision (a)(2) of this section ~~a durable poster or framed copy containing:~~

(A)(i) ~~The~~ A durable poster or framed copy of the national motto of the United States, “In God We Trust”.

(ii) The national motto shall:

(a) Be easily readable on a poster or framed copy of at least eleven inches by fourteen inches (11" x 14");

(b) Be the central focus of the poster or framed copy, ~~and.~~

(c) Be displayed in a large font size, ~~and.~~



1 (iii) The durable poster or framed copy required
2 under subdivision (a)(1)(A)(i) of this section shall include:

3 ~~(B)(a)~~ An accurate representation of the
4 United States flag, which shall be under the national motto; and

5 ~~(G)(b)~~ An accurate representation of the
6 Arkansas state flag or flags; and

7 (B)(i) A durable poster or framed copy of a historical
8 representation of the Ten Commandments.

9 (ii) The durable poster or framed copy of a
10 historical representation of the Ten Commandments required by subdivision
11 (a)(1)(B)(i) of this section shall:

12 (a) Include the text of the Ten Commandments
13 in a size and typeface that is legible to a person with average vision from
14 anywhere in the room in which the durable poster or framed copy is displayed;
15 and

16 (b) Be at least sixteen inches by twenty
17 inches (16" x 20").

18 (iii) The text of the durable poster or framed copy
19 of the Ten Commandments shall read as follows:

20 "The Ten Commandments

21 I am the Lord thy God.

22 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

23 Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven images.

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

25 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

26 Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land

27 which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

28 Thou shalt not kill.

29 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

30 Thou shalt not steal.

31 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

32 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.

33 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his
34 maidservant, nor his cattle, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."

35 (2) The durable posters or framed copies donated or purchased
36 under subdivision (a)(1) of this section shall be displayed in each:

1 (A) Public institution of higher education and elementary
2 and secondary school library and classroom in this state; and

3 (B) Public building or facility in this state that is
4 maintained or operated by taxpayer funds.

5 (b) The copies or posters *authorized under* this section shall either
6 be donated or ~~shall be~~ purchased solely with funds made available through
7 voluntary contributions to the local school boards, local building governing
8 entity, or the Building Authority Division.

9 (c) If a copy or poster required under this section does not meet the
10 requirements of subsection (a) of this section, then an institution specified
11 under subsection (a) of this section may replace the copy or poster with a
12 copy or poster that meets the requirements of subsection (a) of this section:

13 (1) With public funds; or

14 (2) By accepting a private donation.

15 (d) If an institution specified under subsection (a) of this section
16 has a copy or poster that is not needed for display, then the institution
17 specified under subsection (a) of this section shall donate the copy or
18 poster to another institution specified under subsection (a) of this section.

19
20 /s/J. Dotson

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23 APPROVED: 4/14/25
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A photograph of the United States flag waving on a tall pole against a clear sky. The flag is positioned on the left side of the frame, with its stars and stripes clearly visible. The text "SEE YOU AT THE POLE" is overlaid in the center in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

**SEE YOU
AT THE POLE**

See You at the Pole

DESCRIPTION

See You at the Pole is a time of prayer on the fourth Wednesday of September when students meet at their school flagpole before school to lift up their friends, families, teachers, school, and nation to God. It is student-initiated, student-organized, and student-led.

DATE/TIME

Fourth Wednesday of September each year.

PURPOSE

Prayer.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The first nationwide See You at the Pole gatherings were held in 1991. This has been an annual event since then. Today, more than 3 million students from 20 different countries take part in See You at the Pole.



WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO

- Find out if there is any existing See You at the Pole effort going on at your school.
- Let school officials know that you are planning to have a See You at the Pole event before school.
- If they have concerns, download helpful materials from the See You at the Pole website to let them review it.
- Don't expect the event to be spontaneous. Leadership is needed, and a plan with delegated responsibilities will make the event run smoothly for attendees.
- Student-leaders and adults can gather and plan the event.
- Fellowship of Christian Athletes and other religious groups on campus may be able to help.
- Hold a pre-pole rally for student and adult leaders to meet with students and plan the See You at the Pole Event.
- The event can include students from more than one school.
- Plan, prepare, publicize, and pray for the event.
- See You at the Pole has a national office with an excellent website. Go to the See You at the Pole website and download the helpful information. See their contact information on the next page.



HELPFUL CONTACTS

See You at the Pole

P.O. Box 60134
Fort Worth, TX 76115
(817) 447-7526
syatp@syatp.com
www.syatp.com

LEGAL HELP

The See You at the Pole Website has a list of legal advocacy organizations that will help clarify that students have the right to pray before school on their school campuses.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Question: Isn't this just a backdoor way to bring Christianity into a public school?

Answer: The purpose of See You at the Pole is for students to pray. Christian students and their faith are already in every public school. This event allows them to practice their faith lawfully at school. The courts have affirmed over and over again that voluntary, student-led prayer is protected under the U.S. Constitution.

2. Question: What if school officials object?

Answer: Leave the campus and hold the event elsewhere. Later there will be time to contact one or more national organizations with lawyers who can persuade school officials to allow student-led religious activities at the school.

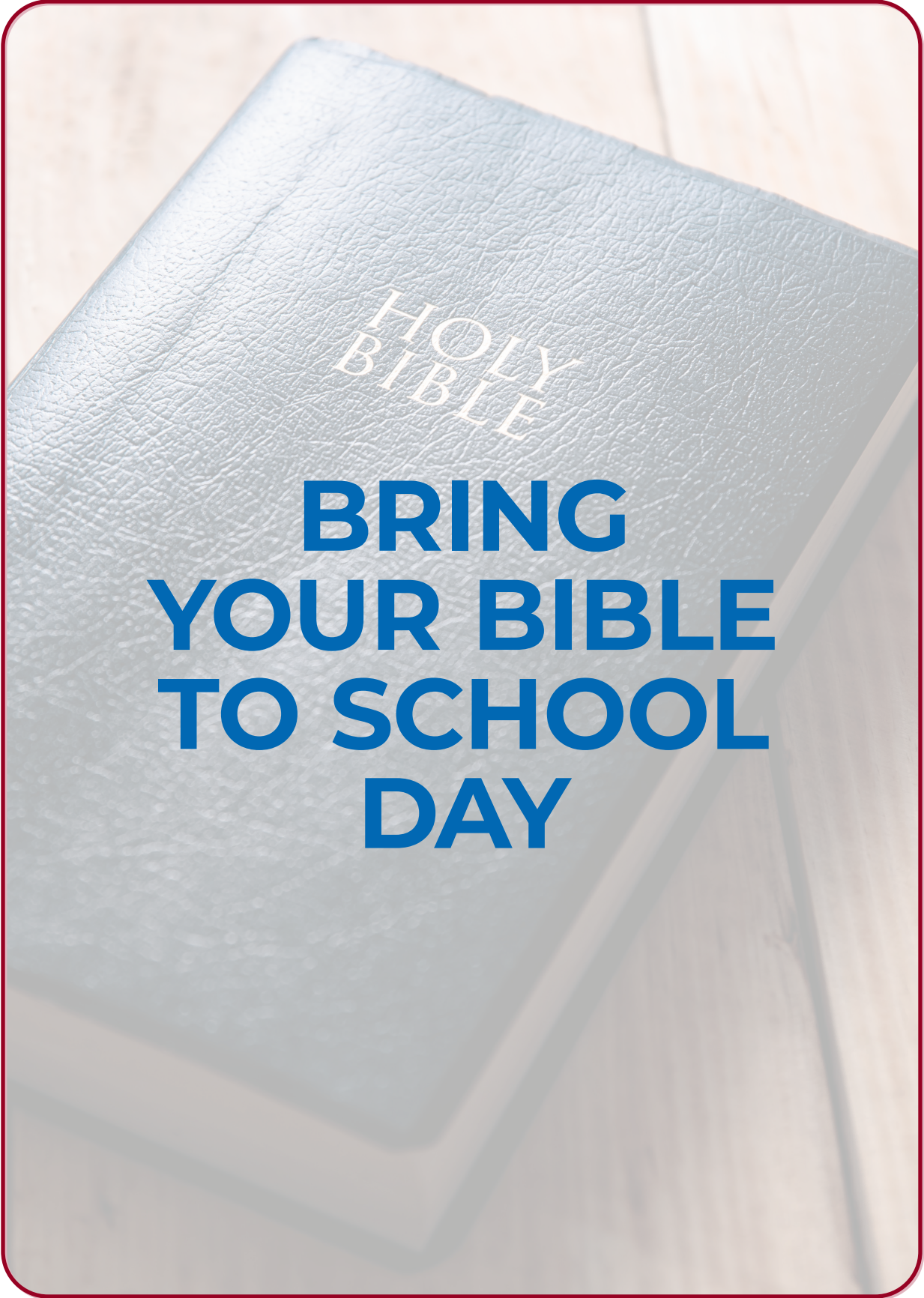
*The courts have affirmed over and over again
that voluntary, student-led prayer
is protected under the U.S. Constitution.*

3. Question: Can adults help students plan See You at the Pole?

Answer: Yes. Adults can help student leaders plan, but only students should lead the actual event.

4. Question: Wouldn't it be best for Christian students to avoid being too visible and outspoken at school since this might motivate Satan worshipers, religious cults, and non-Christian groups to ask for the same privileges?

Answer: Non-Christians and even Satan worshipers already have the constitutional right to practice their religious faiths at school the same as Christians. Courts in some states have allowed Satan clubs on campus. It makes little sense for Christians to refrain from practicing their faith out of concern that it might stir up Satan worshipers, cults, or non-Christian religions.



HOLY
BIBLE

**BRING
YOUR BIBLE
TO SCHOOL
DAY**

Bring Your Bible to School Day

DESCRIPTION

Bring Your Bible to School Day began in 2014 by Focus on the Family. The event encourages students to bring a Bible with them to school. This is a student initiated event that enables them to display their faith by carrying their Bible to school.

DATE/TIME

The first Thursday in October of each year.

PURPOSE

To enable students to exercise their religious freedom by demonstrating their faith in God through carrying and, if they choose, reading and discussing the Bible at school.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Many would say that the Bible is the greatest book of all time. As long as schools allow students to carry books and read them, they can carry and read the Bible. This is growing in popularity, with over 877,000 students and 5,000 churches taking part nationwide each year.

WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO

- The main thing for students to do is simply bring their Bible to school.
- Work with your school administrators and school board to have Bring your Bible to School Day put on the school calendar and announced to students and teachers ahead of time.
- Work with the faculty sponsor of faith-based groups that are already on campus. See if the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and other groups will help promote Bring Your Bible to School Day.
- Promote Bring your Bible to School Day in your church, especially with youth and children's ministries. Have your youth leader work with students to prepare them for the day.
- Get together with parents of other students and make a plan for using Bring Your Bible to School Day as a time for them to reach out to other students about what the Bible says.
- Have your student carry an extra Bible or New Testament with them to school so they can give it away.
- Purchase and donate Bibles to students who may want to share Bibles with others.

HELPFUL CONTACTS

For resources or tools to equip students for Bring Your Bible to School Day:

Focus on the Family

8605 Explorer Drive
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80920
800-232-6459
www.focusonthefamily.com/bring-your-bible

For legal assistance if your student encounters problems exercising their religious freedom at school:

Alliance Defending Freedom

15100 N. 90th Street
Scottsdale, AZ 85260
(800) 835-5233
adflegal.org/request-legal-help

First Liberty

2001 West Plano Parkway, suite 1600
Plano, TX 75075
(972) 942-4444
<https://firstliberty.org/contact-us/>

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT BRING YOUR BIBLE TO SCHOOL DAY

1. **Question:** Since the Bible is a religious text, doesn't bringing it to a public school violate the separation of church and state?

Answer: No. This is because the Bible is a book. As long as your child's school allows students to bring books of their own choosing to school, they can bring a religious text like the Bible to school.

2. **Question:** Even if a student is allowed to carry a Bible with them to school, won't reading it and discussing it with other students be a violation of the separation of church and state?

Answer: No. Once again, the Bible is a book. As long as the school allows students to carry books of their choosing to school and there are times during the day when students can discuss items of their choosing, they can read and discuss the Bible.

3. **Question:** What if school officials tell a student that they cannot carry a Bible to school or they prohibit the student from reading or discussing it?

Answer: Hopefully the school attorney can persuade the school to respect the religious rights of students. If not, the Alliance Defending Freedom and First Liberty listed under Helpful Contacts can help with legal advice.

4. **Question:** Can adults outside the school be involved in Bring Your Bible to School Day?

Answer: Yes. Anyone from outside the school can be involved in all aspects of Bring Your Bible to School Day, except they cannot go to the school and participate on the campus during school hours. They can promote it, organize students to participate, work with school officials, and even furnish students with Bibles to carry.

5. Question: Can school personnel stop students from reading a Bible silently or aloud at school?

Answer: If it is at a time when the student is free to read other material of their choosing, they can read the Bible. If the student is free to read other material of their choosing aloud, they can read the Bible aloud.

6. Question: Can students talk to other students about the Bible at school?

Answer: If it is at a time when students are allowed to discuss topics of their choosing with other students, they can discuss the Bible.

7. Question: Can parents or leaders at church teach students how to discuss the Bible and other spiritual matters with students at school?

Answer: Yes. The student can converse with other students about spiritual matters as long as it is at a time when the school allows students to discuss matters of their own choosing.

8. Question: Can a child in kindergarten or first grade bring a Bible to school?

Answer: Yes. If the school allows children to bring other books of their choosing, they can bring a Bible or Bible storybook. It may be more practical for younger children to carry a smaller, child-sized text such as a New Testament or Bible storybook for children.

9. Question: What if Bible study groups or prayer groups or other gatherings begin as a result of Bring Your Bible to School Day?

Answer: These are permitted at school as long as they are student-led and as long as gatherings are held at a time when other groups would be allowed to meet.

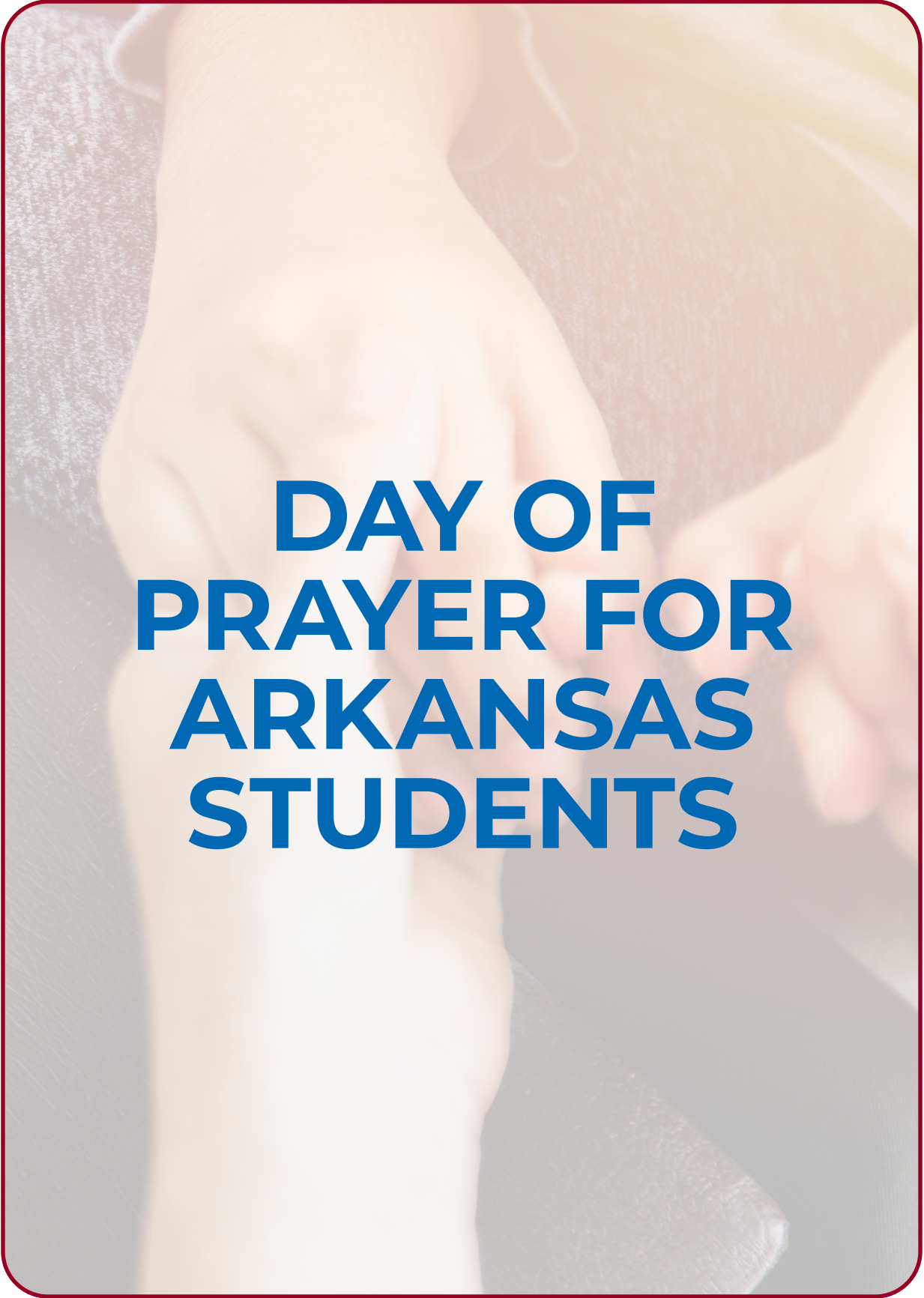
10. Question: Can the school officially promote Bring Your Bible to School Day?

Answer: Yes. For example, If the school can promote Earth Day, Dictionary Day, Black History Month, Pride Month, or World Poetry Day, they can promote Bring Your Bible to School Day.

11. Question: Can a student bring a Koran or other religious text to school, read it, and discuss it with other students?

Answer: Yes. As long as the school allows students to bring books of their choosing to school, they can bring a Koran or other religious text and discuss it with other students.



A close-up photograph of several hands clasped together in a prayer position. The hands are of different skin tones, suggesting a diverse group of people. The image is softly blurred and has a warm, golden light overlay. The entire image is framed by a thin red border with rounded corners.

DAY OF PRAYER FOR ARKANSAS STUDENTS

Day of Prayer for Arkansas Students

DESCRIPTION

In 2021 the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 902, an act to establish A Day of Prayer for Arkansas Students. This act establishes a day for everyone to pray for students, teachers, school administrators, and schools each year.

DATE/TIME

The Last Wednesday in September of each year.

PURPOSE

For everyone to pray for students, teachers, school administrators, and schools.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Act 902 says that the governor shall annually proclaim the last Wednesday in September of each year as “A Day of Prayer for Arkansas Students.”

WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO

- Pray in your own home for students, teachers, and schools of all types.
- Share the day for prayer on social media.
- Announce this in your church, and set aside time to pray for all types of schools, students, and teachers, both public and non-public.
- Mobilize any intercessory prayer groups in your area to pray.
- Announce this at meetings of the ministerial alliance and civic clubs, at work, or at school.
- Gather a group of people from around the community to pray in front of your public or private school.
- Ask the faculty sponsor of your school’s student newspaper to have interested students do a story about the Day of Prayer for Arkansas Students.
- Contact the Governor’s Office and thank her for proclaiming a day of prayer for students.
- Ask your local newspaper to publish the proclamation.
- Get a digital copy of the proclamation and present it at a local school board meeting and ask them to pass a similar resolution encouraging everyone in the community to pray for the school.
- Work with non-public schools to pray for them. Private schools and homeschool support groups may allow you to pray for them in person where they meet.

HELPFUL CONTACTS

Family Council

414 South Pulaski, Suite 2
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 375-7000
www.info@FamilyCouncil.org

Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders

500 Woodlane Street
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 682-2345
[governor.arkansas.gov/online-services/
contact-the-governor](http://governor.arkansas.gov/online-services/contact-the-governor)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT A DAY OF PRAYER FOR ARKANSAS STUDENTS

1. Question: Does the law establishing a day of prayer for students mandate anything?

Answer: The only mandate in the law is for the governor to annually proclaim the last Wednesday in September as “A Day of Prayer for Arkansas Students.” The Department of Education is required to notify all public schools about the day.

2. Question: Does the day of prayer apply to anything more than students in public school?

Answer: Yes, it applies to all students no matter where they attend school. In addition, it applies to all teachers, administrators, and all types of schools.

3. Question: Does the law only apply to Christians praying for students and schools?

Answer: No, the law does not favor any particular religion or way of praying.

4. Question: Do schools have to allow anyone to come on campus and pray?

Answer: No. Rules on campus visitors still apply.

5. Question: Isn't this just a way to promote Christianity at school?

Answer: Students are free to promote this proclamation at school the same as anything else the Governor proclaims. It designates a particular day for people to pray for students, their schools and educators without mandating anything for schools or students.

6. Question: What if the ACLU or Freedom from Religion Foundation, or non-Christian parents object to the day of prayer?

Answer: Their objections would not have any merit. Even these individuals and groups agree that prayer in religious gatherings is a right. The law says nothing about praying at the school. Rather, this is a proclamation about prayer for the school and its students and teachers. This day of prayer is to be observed and practiced in local houses of worship, people's homes, and in other places where people of faith gather. No one is being coerced to pray, and no public funds are being used to observe the Day of Prayer for Students.

State of Arkansas
93rd General Assembly
Regular Session, 2021

A Bill

SENATE BILL 662

By: Senators Hill, Irvin
By: Representative C. Cooper

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A DAY OF PRAYER FOR ARKANSAS
STUDENTS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO ESTABLISH A DAY OF PRAYER FOR ARKANSAS
STUDENTS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 10, Subchapter 1, is amended
to add an additional section to read as follows:

6-10-135. A Day of Prayer for Arkansas Students.

(a) The General Assembly finds that the students of the Natural State
are the state's greatest resource.

(b) The last Wednesday in September of each year shall be recognized
as "A Day of Prayer for Arkansas Students".

(c) The Governor shall:

(1) Annually proclaim the last Wednesday in September of each
year as "A Day of Prayer for Arkansas Students"; and

(2) Call upon the citizens of this state, in accordance with
their own faith and consciences, to pray, meditate, or otherwise reflect upon
the following individuals in this state:

(A) Students;

(B) Teachers;

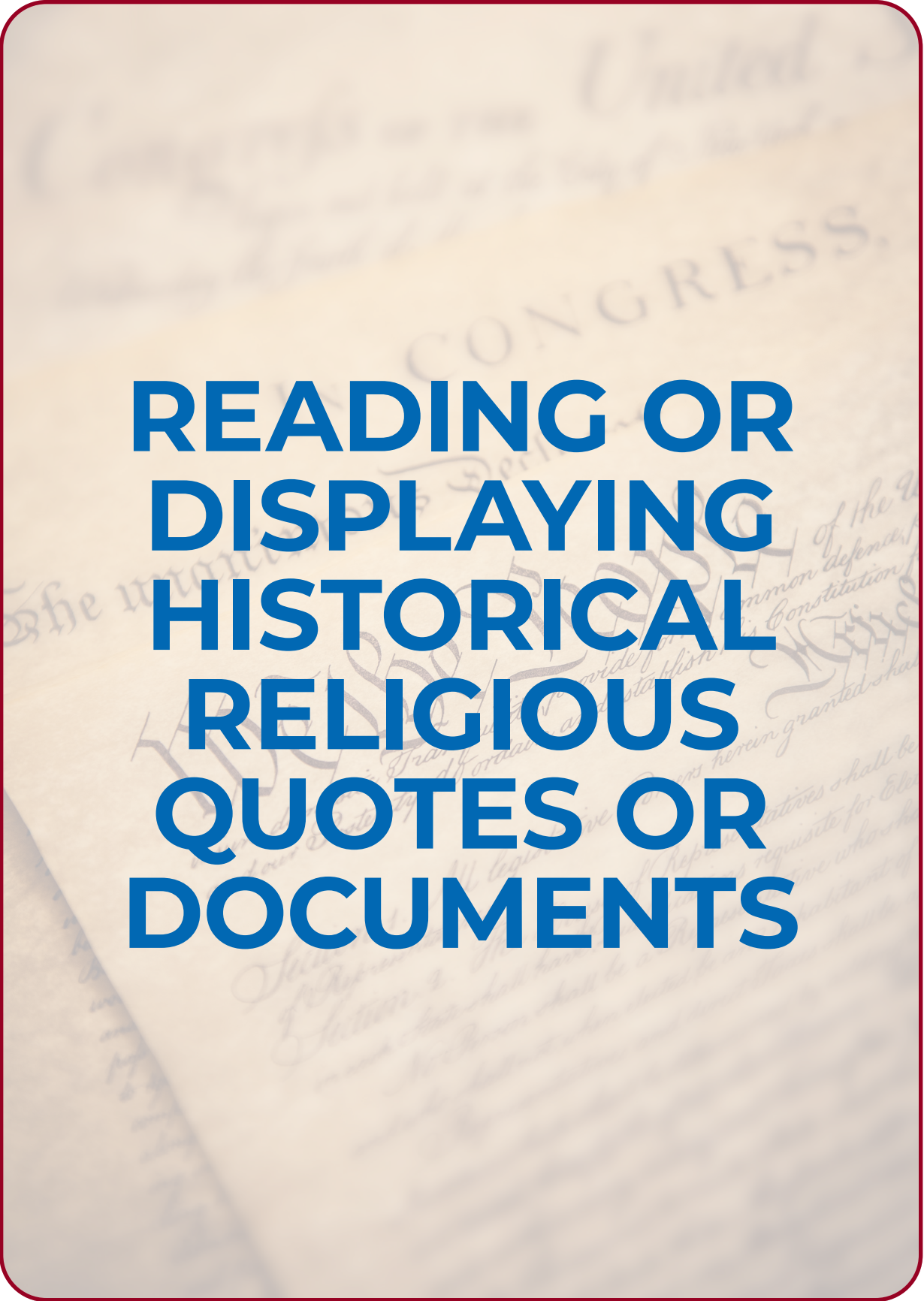
(C) School administrators; and

(D) Schools.



1 (d) The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall annually
2 notify public school districts and open-enrollment public charter schools
3 regarding A Day of Prayer for Arkansas Students.
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6 **APPROVED: 4/26/21**
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READING OR DISPLAYING HISTORICAL RELIGIOUS QUOTES OR DOCUMENTS

Reading or Displaying Historical Religious Quotes or Documents

DESCRIPTION

Acts 290 of 2003 and 852 of 2019 permit public school teachers and administrators to read or post historical documents that may contain religious references or quotations.

DATE/TIME

At any time at school, in any building, classroom, or at any event.

PURPOSE

That there be no content-based censorship of American history or heritage in this state based on religious references in these writings, documents, and records.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A copy of the law shall be distributed to the superintendent of each public school district by the Department of Education, and each superintendent shall provide a copy to each teacher and school board member.

WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO

- Posters can be donated to the school. Churches or individuals can purchase posters with photographs of the founding fathers with their quotes for displaying at school.
- Having students make posters and display them at school would be a good learning experience.
- Schools or teachers can purchase posters for posting in classrooms and elsewhere.
- Civil clubs or patriotic organizations could purchase posters or signs and donate them to the school.
- A teacher can decorate a bulletin board with quotes from the founding fathers.
- A teacher can read to the class documents or quotes with religious references from historical figures.
- Students can make signs or banners with historical quotes with a religious reference and get permission to post them in any school building or any event.
- A student club could take on a project of placing posters or signs in every classroom

HELPFUL CONTACTS

Wallbuilders

P.O. Box 397

Aledo, TX 76008

(817) 441-6044

www.wallbuilders.com

wbcustomerservice@wallbuilders.com

Poster with Religious Quotes from the Founding Fathers are available for purchase at various online sources. *Be certain to verify the authenticity of the quotes before posting.*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE DISPLAY OR READING OF DOCUMENTS OF AMERICAN HISTORY

1. Question: Does this law require anyone to do anything?

Answer: Local school boards must allow teachers or administrators to read or post historical documents, and the board cannot censor the content of these documents based on religious references. In addition, the Department of Education is required to distribute a copy of the law to every school board member in the state.

2. Question: What if the content of the document or a quote is offensive to students or it violates community standards?

Answer: The law enumerates a long list of historical documents like the Bill of Rights and the Gettysburg Address. In addition it allows speeches and other documents that have a historical significance relating to the founding of the United States or Arkansas. This means that the quote must be of historical significance. The best practice, considering current U.S. Supreme Court case law, would be to ensure a diversity of quotes with historical significance in any display; quotes in posters and displays should not be excerpts with solely religious references.

3. Question: Isn't this just a way to get Christianity into public schools?

Answer: No. This is an effort to keep schools from censoring any historical document or speech with a religious reference. This is an effort to get accurate American History taught in our schools. What better way to inform students about what leading figures in history thought and why they acted in certain ways than to read first-hand and understand what they had to say! It is historically significant to know how religion and faith affected the actions of important figures in American or Arkansas history.

4. Question: Doesn't this violate the separation of church and state?

Answer: No. Reading a religious quote by a historical figure in no way constitutes state promoted religion. The quote speaks for itself. Denying a student the right to read a religious quote violates free speech and a number of other constitutional rights.

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to the law as it existed prior to this session of the General Assembly.

State of Arkansas
84th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2003

As Engrossed: S2/20/03

A Bill

Act 290 of 2003
SENATE BILL 57

By: Senator Altes
By: Representative Harris

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO REQUIRE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO
ALLOW AND ENCOURAGE TEACHERS TO READ OR DISPLAY
DOCUMENTS OF AMERICAN OR ARKANSAS HISTORY; AND
FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

REQUIRE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO ALLOW
AND ENCOURAGE TEACHERS TO READ OR
DISPLAY DOCUMENTS OF AMERICAN OR
ARKANSAS HISTORY.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-16-122 is amended to read as follows:
6-16-122. American heritage.

(a) Local school boards ~~may~~ shall allow ~~and encourage~~ any teacher or
administrator in a public school district of this state to read or post in a
public school building, classroom, or event any excerpts or portions of:

- (1) The Preamble to the Arkansas Constitution;
- (2) The Declaration of Independence;
- (3) The United States Constitution;
- (4) The Mayflower Compact;
- (5) *The national motto;*
- (6) The national anthem;
- (7) The Pledge of Allegiance;
- (8) The writings, speeches, documents, and proclamations of the



1 founding fathers and Presidents of the United States;

2 (9) Organic documents from the pre-Colonial, Colonial,
3 Revolutionary, Federalist, and post-Federalist eras;

4 (10) United States Supreme Court decisions; and

5 (11) Acts of the United States Congress.

6 (b) There shall be no content-based censorship of American history or
7 heritage in this state based on religious or other references in these
8 writings, documents, and records.

9 (c) A copy of this section shall be distributed to the superintendent
10 of each school district in the state by the Department of Education,
11 whereupon the superintendents then shall provide a copy to each teacher and
12 each school board member.

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14 /s/ Altes

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17 **APPROVED: 3/4/2003**
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State of Arkansas

As Engrossed: H3/12/19

92nd General Assembly

A Bill

Regular Session, 2019

HOUSE BILL 1747

By: Representative Dotson

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT CONCERNING AMERICAN HERITAGE IN PUBLIC
SCHOOLS; TO EXPAND THE TYPES OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS
AND EVENTS THAT MAY BE DISCUSSED, READ, OR POSTED IN
A PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDING OR CLASSROOM; AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO EXPAND THE TYPES OF HISTORICAL
DOCUMENTS AND EVENTS THAT MAY BE
DISCUSSED, READ, OR POSTED IN A PUBLIC
SCHOOL BUILDING OR CLASSROOM.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-16-122 is amended to read as follows:

6-16-122. American heritage.

(a) *Local school district boards of directors shall allow any teacher
or administrator in a public school district of this state to read or post in
a public school building, or classroom, or at an event, any excerpts or
portions of:*

(1) The Preamble to the Arkansas Constitution;

(2) The Declaration of Independence;

(3) The United States Constitution;

(4) Amendments 1-10 of the United States Constitution, known as
"the Bill of Rights";

~~(4)~~(5) The Mayflower Compact;

~~(5)~~(6) The national motto;



~~(6)~~(7) The national anthem;
~~(7)~~(8) The Pledge of Allegiance;
~~(8)~~(9) The writings, speeches, documents, and proclamations of
the founding fathers and ~~Presidents~~ presidents of the United States;
~~(9)~~(10) Organic documents from the pre-Colonial, Colonial,
Revolutionary, Federalist, and post-Federalist eras;
~~(10)~~(11) United States Supreme Court decisions and records; ~~and~~
~~(11)~~(12) Acts and published records of the United States
Congress;
(13) Thomas Paine's 1776 pamphlet entitled "Common Sense";
(14) Executive orders of the presidents of the United States;
(15) The Northwest Ordinance;
(16) President George Washington's Farewell Address;
(17) The Emancipation Proclamation;
(18) The Gettysburg Address; and
(19) Any other document of historical significance relating to
the founding of the United States or the State of Arkansas.

(b) There shall be no content-based censorship of American history or heritage in this state based on religious or other references in these writings, documents, and records.

(c) A copy of this section shall be distributed to the superintendent of each public school district in the state by the Department of Education, ~~whereupon~~ and the public school district superintendents then shall provide a copy of this section to each teacher and each public school district board member.

(d) To ensure public high school students understand the United States' representative form of limited government, the liberties secured in the Bill of Rights, federalism, and other basic principles that are essential to the stability and endurance of our constitutional republic, a public school district may:

(1) Require that public high school students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the nation's founding and documents relevant to the nation's founding in order to receive a certificate or diploma of graduation from the public high school;

(2) Include among the requirements for graduation from a public high school in the public school district a passing grade in a course that

1 includes without limitation primary instruction regarding:

2 (A) The Declaration of Independence;

3 (B) The United States Constitution and its amendments; and

4 (C) Representative readings from the Federalist Papers;

5 and

6 (3) Require that a public high school teach public high school
7 students about the nation's founding and documents relevant to the nation's
8 founding, including without limitation:

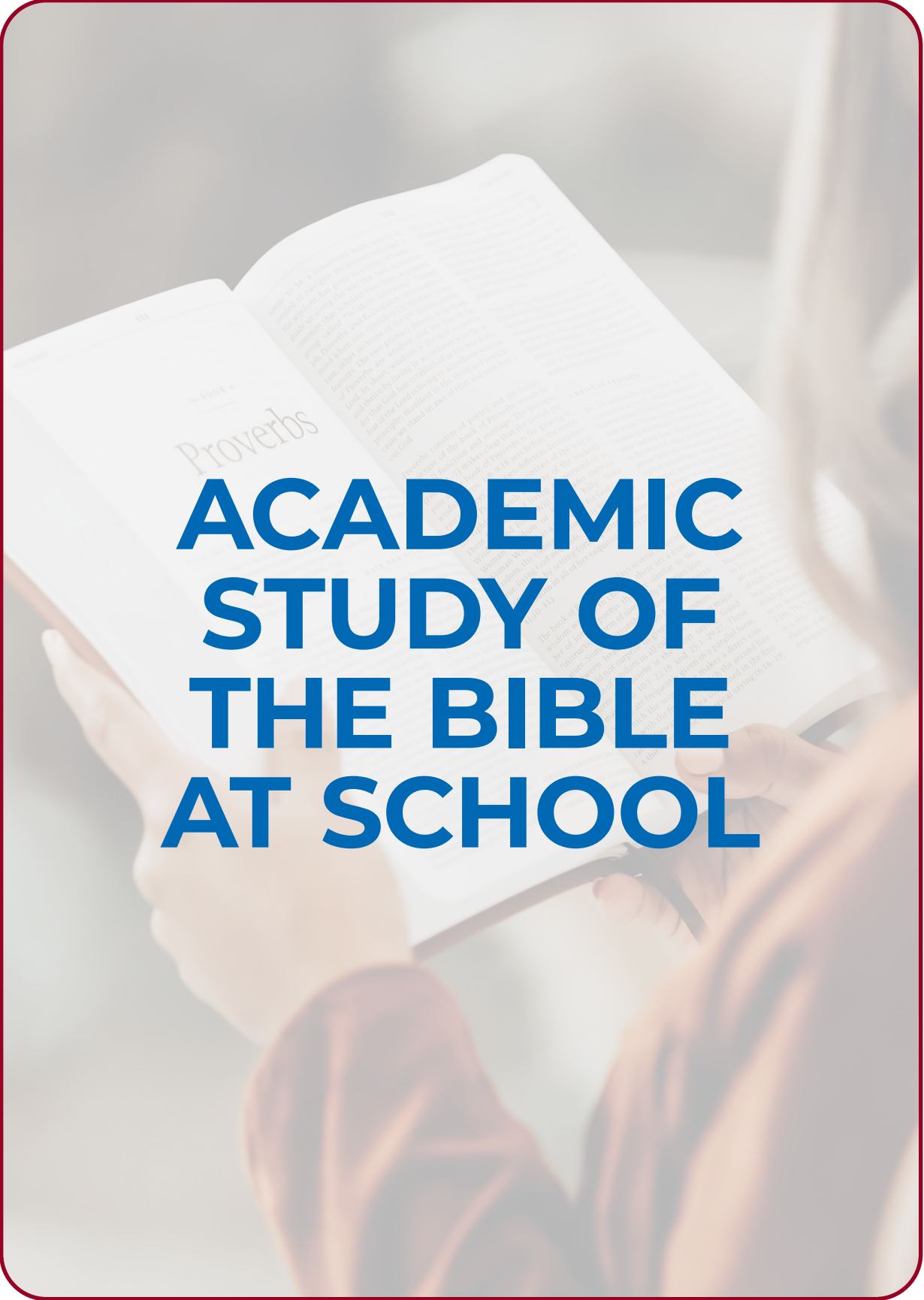
9 (A) The Declaration of Independence;

10 (B) The United States Constitution and its amendments; and

11 (C) Representative readings from the Federalist Papers.

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13 */s/Dotson*

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16 **APPROVED: 4/10/19**
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A person is shown from the chest up, holding an open Bible. The Bible is open to the book of Proverbs, with the title 'Proverbs' visible on the left page. The person is wearing a brown garment. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting. Overlaid on the center of the image is the text 'ACADEMIC STUDY OF THE BIBLE AT SCHOOL' in a large, bold, blue sans-serif font.

ACADEMIC STUDY OF THE BIBLE AT SCHOOL

Academic Study of the Bible at School

DESCRIPTION

In 2013 the Arkansas Legislature affirmed the right of public schools to offer courses in the academic study of the Bible. In 2019, they expanded this law by directing the Department of Education to create a Bible course for high school credit. The course must consist of a nonsectarian, nonreligious academic study of the Bible and its influence on literature, art, music, culture, and politics.

DATE/TIME

At any grade level during any class period at a public school.

PURPOSE

- To equip students with literary forms and symbols in the Bible that are constantly referred to in art, music, and literature.
- To give the student an understanding of the influence of the Bible on history, law, community, and cultural life.
- To give insight into the founding fathers' worldviews taken from the Bible promoting human rights, women's rights, social justice, and so on.
- To provide knowledge of Middle-Eastern history (i.e. Jewish and Arab), conflicts, geography, and religions.
- To teach students how to learn and use multiple, complex skills.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Even without a law, schools have the Constitutional right to offer a study of the Bible as an academic course. The U.S. Supreme Court's 1963 *Abington v. Schempp* decision says that public schools can teach about the Bible and about religion in an objective, academic context.

"It might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment."

—*Sch. Dist. of Abington Twp., Pa. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203, 225 (1963).

WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO

- See if your public school has an academic study of the Bible course. If it does, do what you can to make it as good as possible.
- Organize a group of parents who support an academic study of the Bible course who can appeal to your local school superintendent and school board to begin a Bible study course at your school.
- Do your research into the various academic study of the Bible courses that are available. See the helpful resources below.
- Be prepared to make your case before the superintendent, curriculum committee, or the school board.

HELPFUL CONTACTS

National Council for Bible Curriculum in Public Schools

P.O. Box 9743
Greensboro, NC 27429
(336) 921-0070

RESOURCES IN PRINT AND ONLINE

Academic Study of the Bible: Curriculum Framework by the Arkansas Department of Education



Bible Electives in Public School: A Guide



Finding Common Ground—A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education by Charles C. Haynes.

The Bible in Public Schools



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF THE BIBLE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1. Question: Is this legal? What about the separation of church and state?

Answer: The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Abington vs. Schempp* that the study of the Bible or of religion when presented objectively as a part of a secular public school program is legal.

2. Question: What if the course fails to meet our expectations?

Answer: It may fall short of expectations, but that does not mean it is not helpful. After all, this may be the only time some students read the Bible.

3. Question: What if my superintendent or school board refuse to offer an academic study of the Bible course?

Answer: Your response can be the same as any other time they refuse to do something else you ask them to do. Bringing public opinion and public pressure to bear can change things. In addition, you will have the opportunity to vote on the members of your local school board.

4. Question: What if an unqualified teacher is hired to teach the academic study of the Bible?

Answer: Your response should be the same if an unqualified superintendent or principal was hired or if an unqualified teacher was teaching English. You do what you can do to help the teacher be qualified. If this fails, you can ask the school to reassign the teacher. Since the academic study of the Bible is an elective, parents can withhold their children from the course.

5. Question: What if the teacher teaches something that is untrue about the Bible?

Answer: The law and court rulings help prevent the course from teaching whether the Bible is true or not. Any teacher who strays over into religious doctrines or promoting particular interpretations of Biblical texts is breaking the law. This is why the selection of a fair and balanced Bible course curriculum is so important. If the teacher follows the curriculum, they should be able to avoid controversy.

6. Question: Is the academic study of the Bible at school really worth it?

Answer: Yes. This may be the only time some students read the Bible. This may be the only time they carry a Bible with them. Being exposed to the time-honored principles in the Bible can be life-changing for some students. This exposure to the Bible may prompt them to remember what it says, to read it on their own, or discuss it with others.

7. Question: How can we find a good academic study of the Bible curriculum?

Answer: There may be several good curriculums available. The most widely used academic study of the Bible curriculum is produced by The National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools.

8. Question: What if the school has no teachers qualified to teach the course?

Answer: A teacher could be hired part time from the community. In some cases there may be qualified individuals in the community who can volunteer to teach the class.

1 State of Arkansas *As Engrossed: H1/30/13 S4/16/13*

2 89th General Assembly

A Bill

3 Regular Session, 2013

HOUSE BILL 1017

4

5 By: Representatives D. Altes, *Ballinger, Harris, Payton*

6 By: Senator G. Stubblefield

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For An Act To Be Entitled

9 AN ACT TO ALLOW SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO ADOPT CURRICULUM
10 STANDARDS AS DIRECTED BY THIS ACT FOR AN ACADEMIC
11 STUDY OF THE BIBLE COURSE THAT MAY BE OFFERED AS AN
12 ELECTIVE COURSE IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT; TO SET
13 REQUIREMENTS FOR TEACHING AN ACADEMIC STUDY OF THE
14 BIBLE COURSE IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL AS DIRECTED BY THIS
15 ACT; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

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Subtitle

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TO ALLOW SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO ADOPT

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CURRICULUM STANDARDS FOR AN ACADEMIC

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STUDY OF THE BIBLE COURSE AS DIRECTED BY

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THIS ACT.

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25 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

26

27 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 16, Subchapter 1 is amended
28 to add an additional section to read as follows:

29

6-16-142. Academic study of the Bible course.

30

31 (a)(1) The State Board of Education shall allow for an elective
32 academic study of the Bible course or courses that consist of a nonsectarian,
33 nonreligious academic study of the Bible and its influence on literature,
34 art, music, culture, and politics to be offered to students in public school
35 districts, if the academic study of the Bible course meets the standards
listed in this section.

36

(2) The curriculum standards submitted by a public school



district for approval of an academic study of the Bible course shall meet the:

(A) Academic rigor and curriculum standards of other elective courses approved by the state board; and

(B) Requirements of the Arkansas Constitution and the United States Constitution.

(b)(1) A public school district that elects to offer an academic study of the Bible course shall implement the course in accordance with the Arkansas Constitution and the United States Constitution, including the manner in which the course is taught in the classroom and the assignment of school district personnel teaching the course.

(2) Personnel assigned to teach the course shall be licensed to teach in the State of Arkansas.

(3) Personnel shall not be assigned to teach the course based on any:

(A) Religious test;

(B) Profession of faith or lack of faith;

(C) Prior or present religious affiliation or lack of affiliation; or

(D) Criteria involving particular beliefs or lack of beliefs about the Bible.

(c) An academic study of the Bible course offered by a public school district shall:

(1) Be taught in an objective and nondevotional manner with no attempt made to indoctrinate students as to either the truth or falsity of the biblical materials or texts from other religious or cultural traditions;

(2) Not include teaching of religious doctrine or sectarian interpretation of the Bible or of texts from other religious or cultural traditions; and

(3) Not disparage or encourage a commitment to a set of religious beliefs.

(d) A public school district that elects to offer an academic study of the Bible course shall use only the standards in this section to:

(1) Evaluate textbooks for an academic study of the Bible course; and

(2) Teach an academic study of the Bible course.

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SECTION 2. DO NOT CODIFY.

*(a) The State Board of Education shall apply the existing adopted
rules governing elective course offerings and permitting a school district to
adopt and teach elective courses to a school district that chooses to adopt
and teach an academic study of the Bible course as an elective course.*

*(b) This act does not require the state board to adopt new rules,
standards, or curriculum frameworks.*

/s/D. Altes

APPROVED: 04/22/2013

State of Arkansas *As Engrossed: H3/18/19 S4/4/19*

92nd General Assembly

A Bill

Regular Session, 2019

HOUSE BILL 1626

By: Representatives Cloud, Dotson

By: Senator B. Ballinger

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT CONCERNING THE OFFERING OF AN ACADEMIC STUDY
OF THE BIBLE COURSE IF STUDENTS REQUEST THAT THE
COURSE BE OFFERED; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

CONCERNING THE OFFERING OF AN ACADEMIC
STUDY OF THE BIBLE COURSE IF STUDENTS
REQUEST THAT THE COURSE BE OFFERED.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-16-145 is amended to read as follows:

6-16-145. Academic study of the Bible course.

(a)(1) The State Board of Education shall allow for an elective
academic study of the Bible course or courses that consist of a nonsectarian,
nonreligious academic study of the Bible and its influence on literature,
art, music, culture, and politics to be offered to students in public ~~school~~
schools or school districts if the academic study of the Bible course meets
the standards listed in this section.

(2) The curriculum standards submitted by a public school or
school district for approval of an academic study of the Bible course shall
meet the:

(A) Academic rigor and curriculum standards of other
elective courses approved by the state board; and

(B) Requirements of the Arkansas Constitution and the
United States Constitution.



1 (b)(1) A public school or school district that elects to offer an
2 academic study of the Bible course shall implement the course in accordance
3 with the Arkansas Constitution and the United States Constitution, including
4 the manner in which the course is taught in the classroom and the assignment
5 of public school or school district personnel teaching the course.

6 (2) Personnel assigned to teach the course shall be licensed to
7 teach in the State of Arkansas.

8 (3) Personnel shall not be assigned to teach the course based on
9 any:

10 (A) Religious test;

11 (B) Profession of faith or lack of faith;

12 (C) Prior or present religious affiliation or lack of
13 affiliation; or

14 (D) Criteria involving particular beliefs or lack of
15 beliefs about the Bible.

16 (c) An academic study of the Bible course offered by a public school
17 or school district shall:

18 (1) Be taught in an objective and nondevotional manner with no
19 attempt made to indoctrinate students as to either the truth or falsity of
20 the biblical materials or texts from other religious or cultural traditions;

21 (2) Not include teaching of religious doctrine or sectarian
22 interpretation of the Bible or of texts from other religious or cultural
23 traditions; and

24 (3) Not disparage or encourage a commitment to a set of
25 religious beliefs.

26 (d) A public school or school district that elects to offer an
27 academic study of the Bible course shall use only the standards in this
28 section to:

29 (1) Evaluate textbooks for an academic study of the Bible
30 course; and

31 (2) Teach an academic study of the Bible course.

32 (e) The Department of Education shall, by the 2019-2020 school year,
33 identify, develop, and approve a Bible course for high school credit that
34 meets the requirements in subsections (a), (b), and (c) of this section.

/s/Cloud

APPROVED: 4/15/19

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Academic Study of the Bible Curriculum Framework

Course Title: Academic Study of the Bible

Course/Unit Credit: 0.5

Course Number: 417050

Teacher Licensure: Please refer to the Course Code Management System (<https://adedata.arkansas.gov/ccms/>) for the most current licensure codes.

Grades: 9–12

ACADEMIC STUDY OF THE BIBLE—ONE SEMESTER

Academic Study of the Bible is a one-semester English elective course that is designed to strengthen students' understanding of the Bible and its impact upon American culture. This nonsectarian, nonreligious, academic course integrates the study of the Bible as a piece of literature with art, music, literature, culture, and politics in order to understand the relationships between the Bible, society, and culture. As an English Language Arts elective, it is expected that students will develop and apply literacy skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The Academic Study of the Bible course does not need Arkansas Department of Education approval.

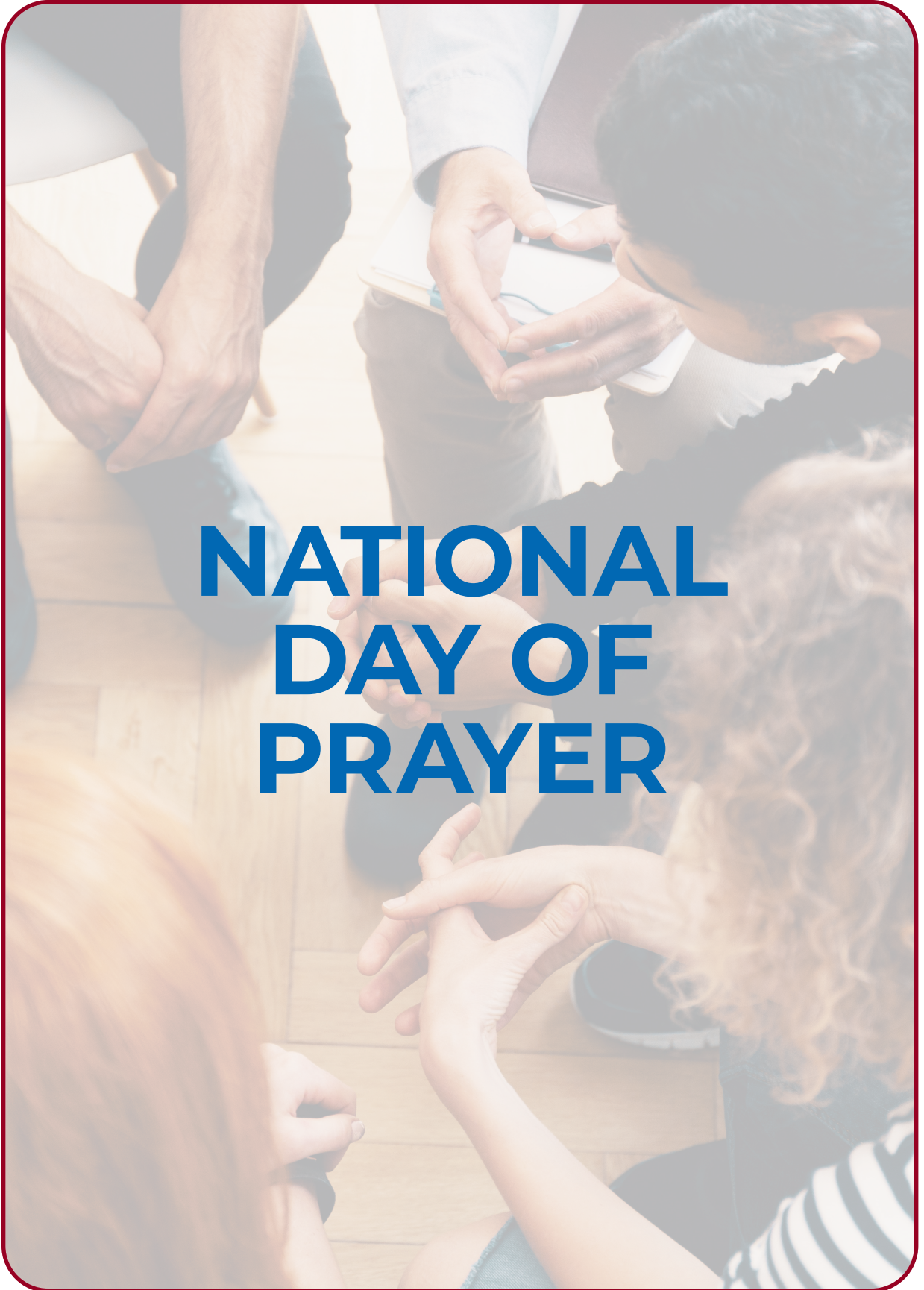
Pursuant to ACA § 6-16-145, an academic study of the Bible course offered by a public school or school district shall:

1. Be taught in an objective and nondevotional manner with no attempt made to indoctrinate students as to either the truth or falsity of the biblical materials or texts from other religious or cultural traditions;
2. Not include teachings of religious doctrine or sectarian interpretations of the Bible or of texts from other religious or cultural traditions; and
3. Not disparage or encourage a commitment to a set of religious beliefs.

STRAND	CONTENT STANDARD
The Bible and its Influence on Literature, Art, and Music	Students will demonstrate an understanding of narratives, poetry, and epistles contained in the Bible and how these biblical genres have influenced literature, art, and music.
The Bible and its Influence on Culture	Students will demonstrate an understanding of relationships among the literature of the Bible, society, politics, and culture.

Notes:

1. Words that appear in italics within this document are defined in the glossary.
2. The examples given (e.g.) are suggestions to guide the instructor.
3. The course strands, content standards, and the SLEs are meant to be taught in an integrated manner.
4. The Arkansas Department of Education course curriculum framework is intended to assist in district curriculum development, unit design, and to provide a uniform, comprehensive guide for instruction. It is not intended to be a state-mandated curriculum for how and when content is taught; these decisions are left to local districts.



National Day of Prayer

DESCRIPTION

Secure passage of a school board resolution recognizing the first Thursday in May as the National Day of Prayer, and directing the superintendent to inform all school district personnel to respect students' and staff's observance of the National Day of Prayer in accordance with the Constitutions of the United States and the State of Arkansas, as well as state law.

DATE/TIME

The first Thursday in May of each year.

PURPOSE

To encourage the observance of the National Day of Prayer at public schools.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In 2022, the school board of Miami-Dade County, Florida passed a resolution in support of the National Day of Prayer. The Broward County, Florida, school board passed a similar resolution in 2023. For decades, students and teachers in schools across the nation have informally observed the National Day of Prayer. In most cases, students, teachers, and others have voluntarily gathered to pray outside before the beginning of the school day. These gatherings have been student-led. Since 1952, every U.S. President has proclaimed the first Thursday in May as the National Day of Prayer.



WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO

- Make a plan for your local school to observe the National Day of Prayer the first Thursday in May.
- Talk to faculty sponsors of existing faith-based clubs that may already be established at your school, and see if they would like to be involved. These could be: the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, organizers of See You at the Pole, a Bible club, Young Life, or others.
- Ask your local school board to pass a resolution directing your local superintendent to direct all school personnel to respect student or staff observance of the National Day of Prayer.
- If your school district has endorsed Pride events, Earth Day, or other days, you should be able to use these as a basis for the school board supporting the National Day of Prayer, a presidential proclamation.
- Create a flier promoting school participation in the National Day of Prayer.
- Work with churches and youth groups to promote the observance at the school.
- The observance could be held on campus before the beginning of the school day.
- The school could allow those who want to pray to attend a special voluntary assembly where prayers are led by students.
- If your schools participate in See You at the Pole, this could be promoted and conducted in much the same way.
- For help with writing a school board resolution, contact a local attorney, the attorney for the school, or Family Council.

HELPFUL CONTACTS

Family Council

414 South Pulaski, Suite 2
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 375-7000
Info@FamilyCouncil.org

National Day of Prayer Task Force

P.O. Box 64225
Colorado Springs, CO 80962
(719) 559-9560
www.NationalDayOfPrayer.org





QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT OBSERVING THE NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER AT SCHOOL

1. Question: Can a school promote the National Day of Prayer?

Answer: Yes. The National Day of Prayer is a proclamation by the President of the United States. Public schools are free to promote this or any other official proclamation.

2. Question: How can a public school promote the President's proclamation for a National Day of Prayer?

Answer: They can post the proclamation online. They can make copies and pass them out to students. They can announce any student-led activities associated with observance of the National Day of Prayer.

*The National Day of Prayer is a proclamation
by the President of the United States. Public schools
are free to promote this or any other official proclamation.*

They can allot time for students to voluntarily participate in the National Day of Prayer. They can allot time for staff members to participate separately. The school board can pass a resolution or other measures supporting the National Day of Prayer.

3. Question: What if the school officials or the school board oppose student participation in the National Day of Prayer?

Answer: If the board and school officials won't cooperate, parents and community members may wish to consider alternate venues. Instead of gathering at the school, students, parents, and teachers can assemble off campus before school or during the evening and hold an event together. Parents and community members could even join in.

RELEASED TIME FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

Released Time for Religious Instruction

DESCRIPTION

Released Time is a program in which—with parental approval—public schools release students for part of the school day to attend off-site religious instruction offered by a private sponsoring group.

DATE/TIME

Determined by the school and the private sponsoring group, but one hour per week per student is common.

PURPOSE

To recognize and reinforce the constitutionally protected right of parents to direct the religious education of their children.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Schools do not have to let students leave campus for religious instruction, but they may do so. It is currently legal for Arkansas schools to offer released time for students to attend off-site religious instruction. The U.S. Supreme Court's 1952 *Zorach v. Clauson* decision affirms this right.

The 1952 *Zorach v. Clauson* ruling laid out three simple guidelines of compliance for Released Time Education programs. They are:

1. No public funds can be used for the program. It must be privately funded by the organization putting it on or other donors.
2. Released Time programs cannot take place on school property
3. Student participation must be voluntary, with written parental consent

WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO

- Work with national groups like School Ministries and Lifewise Academy to learn about Released Time and how you can get a program started in your community.
- Learn about Released Time, and share the concept with people in your church and community.
- Form a group of people who are willing to establish a religious instruction program for students to attend.
- Persuade your local school officials to allow released time for off-site religious instruction.
 - School officials are not required to allow released time education programs. A private group or organization that wishes to start a new program should visit with school officials to determine who can authorize a released time program. That could be the superintendent, the principal, or the school board. Be prepared to address each.

HELPFUL CONTACTS

School Ministries

101 Rice Bent Way, #6
Columbia, SC 29229
(803) 772-5224
info@SchoolMinistries.org
www.SchoolMinistries.org

Lifewise Academy

PO Box 1179
Hilliard, OH 43026
(740) 267-4809
www.lifewise.org

Released Time

Religious Education
www.ReleasedTime.org

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT RELEASED TIME RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

1. **Question: Do schools have to allow students to leave campus for religious instruction?**

Answer: No. The U.S. Supreme Court says that schools may offer this. They do not have to allow students to participate.

2. **Question: Is it legal for a student to leave public school during the day for the purpose of receiving religious instruction away from the school?**

Answer: Yes. It is legal in all 50 states. Some states have taken the extra step of affirming this right in state law.

3. **Question: What are the qualifications for a released time program to be constitutional?**

Answer: Religious instruction must take place off school grounds. Student attendance is voluntary and with parental consent. It must be privately funded. No taxpayer funds can be used.

4. **Question: Who conducts these religious instruction classes?**

Answer: Anyone can conduct the classes, but they are typically sponsored and conducted by churches or community organizations. It is up to the parents to determine if the course is appropriate for their child.

5. **Question: Do those who conduct the religious instruction classes for the students have to create their own curriculum?**

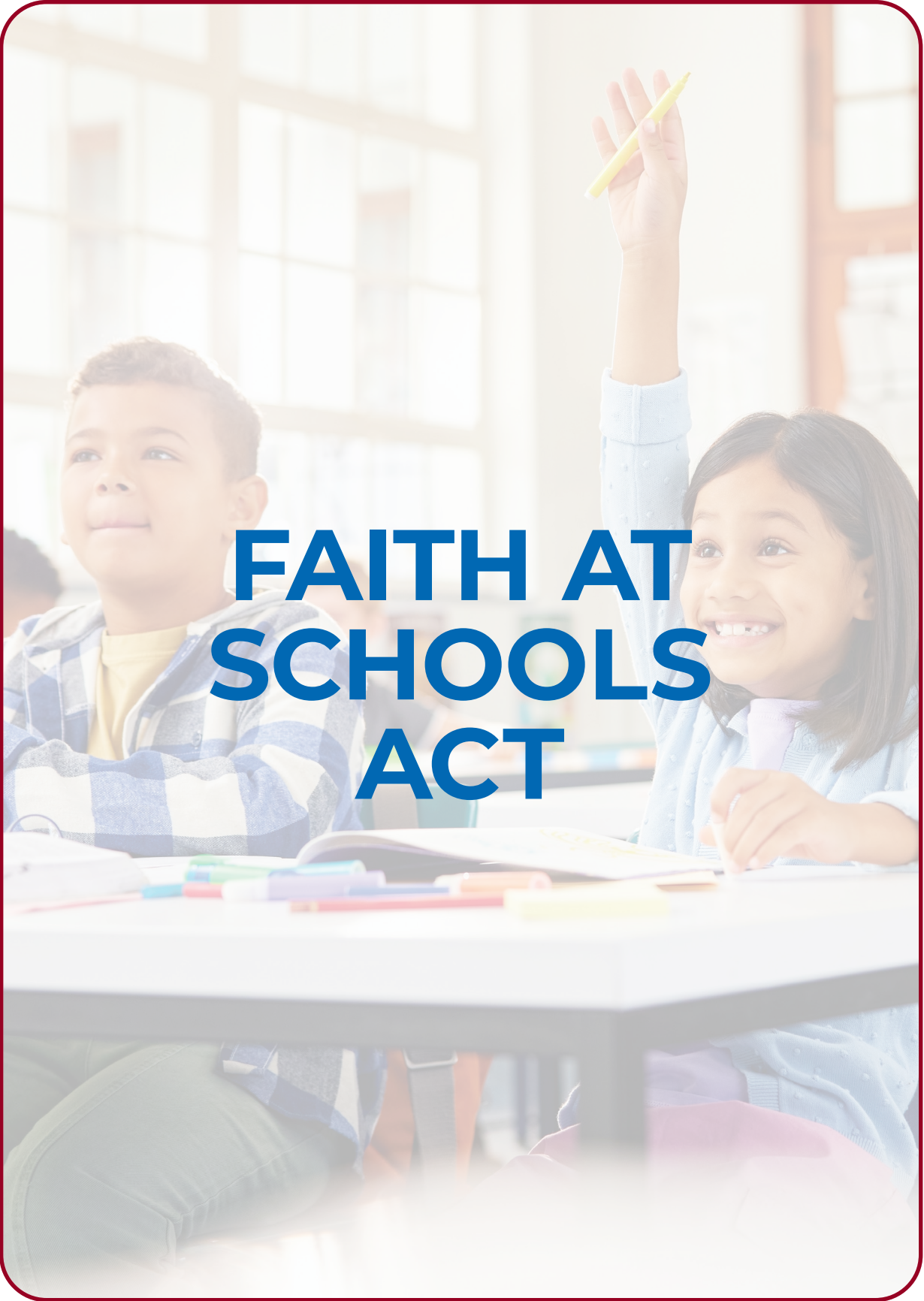
Answer: No. Excellent curriculum resources are available from School Ministries and elsewhere. However, churches or others are free to create their own curriculum and studies as they choose.

6. **Question: What if the religious instruction offered to the students is flawed?**

Answer: It is the responsibility of parents to monitor the content and manner of their child's religious instruction. The classes are voluntary. Parents can remove their child at any time of their choosing. It is also the responsibility of any sponsoring organization or those who are funding it to ensure its integrity.

7. **Question: Could a cult or abnormal religious group start a religious instruction program and students from the school voluntarily participate?**

Answer: Yes, but no one would have to participate. Experiences in other states indicate that while cult groups are cause for concern, they have not been a problem—mainly because few if any parents allow their child to participate. These types of programs don't usually last long due to the lack of participation and funding.

A photograph of two young children, a boy and a girl, sitting at a desk in a classroom. The boy is on the left, looking up and to the right. The girl is on the right, smiling and raising her right hand holding a yellow marker. They are both wearing blue and white striped shirts. The desk has several colorful markers and a notebook on it. The background shows a large window with a grid pattern, letting in bright light. The entire image is framed by a thin red border.

FAITH AT SCHOOLS ACT

Faith at Schools Act

DESCRIPTION

In 2025 the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 400, which affirms religious liberties of public school students, teachers, administrators, and others who are at the school. The law identifies religious freedoms that are already protected by state and federal law—such as the right to pray, discuss religion, or read the Bible during free time at school. The law also helps to make sure that religious expression is treated equally to other types of speech at school.

DATE/TIME

At the beginning of each school year, every public school district must provide each enrolled student and individual employed by the school with a copy of the act electronically, in a handbook, or by other means.

PURPOSE

Our constitution and our laws protect everyone's freedom to practice their faith—including at school. Students and teachers do not surrender their First Amendment rights when they walk through the doors of a school building. This law helps to clarify those rights that are already in state and federal law.

The law identifies religious freedoms that are already protected by state and federal law—such as the right to pray, discuss religion, or read the Bible during free time at school.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

When it comes to religious liberty, public schools have been a battleground for more than 60 years. It's important that we stand up for religious freedom at school. Act 400 is a good law that helps students, teachers, and others understand their rights.

WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO

- Ask if your school district has provided a copy of Act 400 to all students and employees of the district. If not, ask them how they plan to comply with the law.
- Review Act 400 and consider ways that you can encourage the exercise of religious freedom at your local school.
- Share this law with students, teachers, administrators, and principals, and others.

State of Arkansas

As Engrossed: S2/18/25

95th General Assembly

A Bill

Regular Session, 2025

SENATE BILL 223

By: Senator M. Johnson

By: Representative A. Brown

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO CREATE THE RELIGIOUS RIGHTS AT PUBLIC
SCHOOLS ACT OF 2025; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO CREATE THE RELIGIOUS RIGHTS AT PUBLIC
SCHOOLS ACT OF 2025.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. DO NOT CODIFY. Legislative findings and intent.

(a) The General Assembly finds that:

(1) Religious freedom is a cornerstone of our democracy and is
essential to the dignity and freedom of every individual;

(2) Arkansas Constitution Article 14, § 1, provides that
"Intelligence and virtue being the safeguards of liberty and the bulwark of a
free and good government, the State shall ever maintain a general, suitable
and efficient system of free public schools and shall adopt all suitable
means to secure to the people the advantages and opportunities of
education.";

(3) An important advantage and essential opportunity of a system
of free public schools is for students to develop a virtuous lifestyle guided
by deeply held, meaningful values;

(4) Religious worldviews hold an important place in overall
human thought and philosophy;

(5) Religious freedom provides an environment and opportunity
for students to be exposed to worldviews that form the basis for civilization
and thought;



1 (6) Religious freedom at public schools is a right that is
2 protected by state and federal law; and

3 (7) The United States Supreme Court has held in "Tinker v. Des
4 Moines", that neither students nor teachers "shed their constitutional rights
5 to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate".

6 (b) It is the intent of the General Assembly to:

7 (1) Inform Arkansas residents regarding religious protections
8 and liberties;

9 (2) Ensure that this act serves only as a guide to clarify
10 religious rights at public schools, rather than as an exhaustive list of
11 religious rights at public schools; and

12 (3) Affirm that students and public school employees retain many
13 unlisted rights by virtue of their God-given freedoms, which extend beyond
14 those rights explicitly enumerated in this act.

15
16 SECTION 2. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 10, Subchapter 1, is amended
17 to add an additional section to read as follows:

18 6-10-140. Religious Rights at Public Schools Act of 2025.

19 (a) This section shall be known and may be cited as the "Religious
20 Rights at Public Schools Act of 2025".

21 (b) At the beginning of each school year, each public school district
22 and open-enrollment public charter school shall provide each enrolled student
23 and individual employed by the public school district or open-enrollment
24 public charter school with a copy of this act by electronic means or by
25 placement in a handbook, policy manual, or other resource designed to inform
26 students, employees, or parents about policies, procedures, or rights.

27 (c) Under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and
28 United States Supreme Court case law interpreting the First Amendment to the
29 United States Constitution, a student enrolled in a public school district or
30 an open-enrollment public charter school shall retain broad religious
31 freedom, which includes without limitation the right to:

32 (1) Pray silently or aloud, individually or in groups, at any
33 time when the student is permitted to speak freely and engage in discussions
34 of the student's own choosing;

35 (2) Pray by assembling on the property of the student's public
36 school district or open-enrollment public charter school in the same manner

1 that students are allowed to speak and assemble on the property of the
2 student's public school district or open-enrollment public charter school for
3 other activities;

4 (3) Promote *legal religious* activities on the property of the
5 student's public school district or open-enrollment public charter school in
6 the same manner that other activities are promoted;

7 (4) Display, print, recite, or discuss religious figures,
8 religious texts, and religious beliefs in the student's public school
9 district or open-enrollment public charter school assignments in which there
10 is student discretion in choosing topics or people of interest;

11 (5) Give a Bible or other religious text to any other person at
12 the student's public school district or open-enrollment public charter school
13 in the same manner that the student is allowed to give away other books or
14 texts;

15 (6) Individually or in groups conduct religious observances such
16 as speaking, singing, reading, or praying at times when students are free to
17 voluntarily converse and interact;

18 (7) Form and participate in religious clubs, groups, or
19 associations in the same manner that students form and participate in other
20 clubs, groups, or associations;

21 (8) Invite and host members of the clergy or other religious
22 leaders to the student's public school district or open-enrollment public
23 charter school in the same manner that other persons who are not enrolled in
24 the public school district or open-enrollment public charter school are
25 allowed to be present;

26 (9) Express a religious viewpoint in the same manner as other
27 viewpoints may be expressed in the student's public school district or open-
28 enrollment public charter school academic assignments, activities, speech, or
29 other expressions;

30 (10) Pray silently during any moment of silence observed during
31 the school day or at the student's public school district or open-enrollment
32 public charter school activities;

33 (11) Display and discuss the motto of the United States at the
34 student's public school district or open-enrollment public charter school;

35 (12) Read, discuss, and post documents of historical
36 significance that are of a religious nature or contain religious quotes or

1 references;

2 (13) Have a Bible or other religious text at the student's
3 public school district or open-enrollment public charter school in the same
4 manner that the student is allowed to have other books or texts at the
5 student's public school district or open-enrollment public charter school;
6 and

7 (14) Read a Bible or other religious text at the student's
8 public school district or open-enrollment public charter school in the same
9 manner that the student is allowed to read other books or texts at the
10 student's public school district or open-enrollment public charter school.

11 (d) Under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and
12 United States Supreme Court case law interpreting the First Amendment to the
13 United States Constitution, an individual employed by a public school
14 district or an open-enrollment public charter school shall retain broad
15 religious freedom, which includes without limitation the right to:

16 (1) Pray silently during any moment of silence observed during
17 the school day or at the individual's public school district or open-
18 enrollment public charter school activities;

19 (2) Display and discuss the motto of the United States at the
20 individual's public school district or open-enrollment public charter school;

21 (3) Read, discuss, and post documents of historical significance
22 that are of a religious nature or contain religious quotes or references;

23 (4) Have a Bible or other religious text at the individual's
24 public school district or open-enrollment public charter school in the same
25 manner that the individual is allowed to have other books or texts at the
26 individual's public school district or open-enrollment public charter school;
27 and

28 (5) Read a Bible or other religious text at the individual's
29 public school district or open-enrollment public charter school in the same
30 manner that the individual is allowed to read other books or texts at the
31 individual's public school district or open-enrollment public charter school.

32 (e) A public school district and an open-enrollment public charter
33 school may:

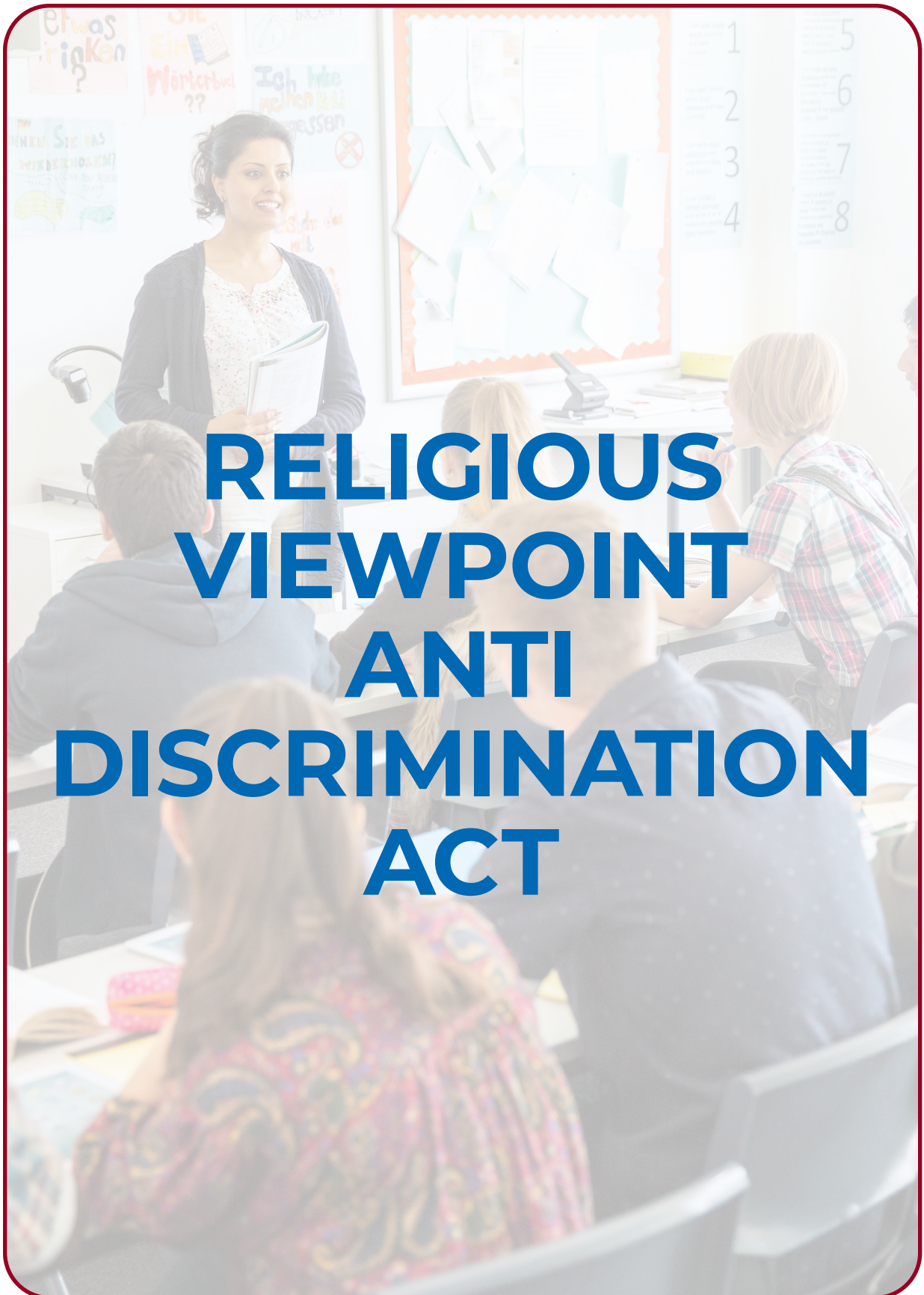
34 (1) Have Bibles and other religious texts in public school
35 libraries, classrooms, and other places where books or texts are available to
36 public school district or open-enrollment public charter school students or

individuals employed by the public school district or open-enrollment public
charter school; and

(2) Offer an academic study of the Bible course as provided by §
6-16-145.

/s/M. Johnson

APPROVED: 3/25/25



Religious Viewpoint Antidiscrimination Act

Act 788 of 2023 The Religious Viewpoint Antidiscrimination Act is a law that protects a public school students' religious viewpoint at school.

The law states that a public school must treat a student that expresses their religious viewpoint (as long as it is on a permissible subject) the same as a student that expresses a secular viewpoint. A public school cannot discriminate against a public school student based on their religious viewpoint.

To help ensure this is followed, Act 788 requires every public school district in Arkansas to adopt a policy ensuring that their school does not discriminate against a student's religious viewpoint. The policy must be clear that it is not sponsoring or promoting the religious viewpoint of a student.

The law requires that certain criteria be in the school policy, though it is not limited to these things. The policy must include:

1. The establishment of a limited public forum for public school student speakers at all public school events where a student may speak publicly.
 - a. **A student's religious viewpoint shall not be excluded** from the limited public forum.
 - b. The school **cannot exclude the student from the limited public forum.**
 - i. This section prevents discrimination of a student that wants to participate in a public forum and express a religious viewpoint.
2. The school must adopt a method, based solely on neutral criteria, for selecting public school speakers at school events, including graduations.
 - a. The school must have procedures in the policy that ensures the speaker doesn't engage in obscene, vulgar, offensively lewd, or indecent speech.
 - b. It must be stated clearly that the views expressed by the student speaker's speech does not reflect the school's position.

Public school students may express their religious viewpoint in the following ways at their public school:

1. Homework
2. Classwork
3. Artwork; and
4. Any other written or oral assignments.

Student assignments shall only be graded and judged based on regular academic standards of substance and relevance, and other conventional, pedagogical topics identified by the school district.

The public school student **shall NOT** be penalized or rewarded solely based on religious content of his or her school work assignments.

HELPFUL CONTACTS

First Liberty

2001 West Plano Parkway, Suite 1600
Plano, TX 75075
(972) 941-4444
Firstliberty.org

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINT ANTIDISCRIMINATION ACT

1. Question: Is this legal? What about the separation of church and state?

Answer: Yes, it is legal. According to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Tinker v. Des Moines*, neither teachers nor students, “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.” The First Amendment is the safeguard for students’ religious beliefs and freedom of expression. It is the duty of a school district to remain neutral and accommodate students’ religious beliefs.

2. Question: Isn’t this just a way to get Christianity into public schools?

Answer: No. This is an effort to keep schools from censoring or discriminating against the religious speech, viewpoints, and expression through school assignments of a public school student.

*According to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in
Tinker v. Des Moines teachers nor students,
“shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech
or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”
The First Amendment is the safeguard for students’
religious beliefs and freedom of expression.*

3. Question: Does this law require anyone to do anything?

Answer: The law does require school districts to adopt policies to ensure the school is following the law accurately.

4. Question: Wouldn’t it be best for Christian students to avoid being too visible and outspoken at school since this might motivate Satan worshipers, religious cults, and non-Christian groups to ask for the same privileges?

Answer: Non-Christians and even Satan worshipers already have the constitutional right to practice their religious faiths at school the same as Christians. Courts in some states have allowed Satan clubs on campus. It makes little sense for Christians to refrain from practicing their faith out of concern that it might stir up Satan worshipers, cults, or non-Christian religions.

State of Arkansas
94th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2023

A Bill

SENATE BILL 556

By: Senator J. Dotson
By: Representative Vaught

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO CREATE THE RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINT
ANTIDISCRIMINATION ACT; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO CREATE THE RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINT
ANTIDISCRIMINATION ACT.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 10, Subchapter 1, is amended to
add an additional section to read as follows:

6-10-137. Religious Viewpoint Antidiscrimination Act.

(a) This section shall be known and may be cited as the "Religious
Viewpoint Antidiscrimination Act".

(b) A public school district:

(1) Shall treat a public school student's voluntary expression,
if any, of a religious viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject in the
same manner the public school district treats a public school student's
voluntary expression of a secular or other viewpoint on an otherwise
permissible subject; and

(2) May not discriminate against a public school student based
on a religious viewpoint expressed by the public school student on an
otherwise permissible subject.

(c)(1) A public school district shall adopt a policy to:

(A) Ensure that a public school district does not
discriminate against a public school student's voluntary expression, if any,



1 of a religious viewpoint; and

2 (B) Eliminate any actual or perceived affirmative school
3 sponsorship or attribution to the public school district of a public school
4 student's public expression of a religious viewpoint, if any.

5 (2) A policy adopted under subdivision (c)(1) of this section
6 shall include without limitation the:

7 (A)(i) Establishment of a limited public forum for public
8 school student speakers at all public school events at which a public school
9 student may speak publicly.

10 (ii) A public school student's expression of a
11 religious viewpoint, if any, on an otherwise permissible subject shall not be
12 excluded from the limited public forum established under subdivision
13 (c)(2)(A)(i) of this section;

14 (B) Provision of a limited public forum that does not
15 discriminate against a public school student's voluntary expression of a
16 religious viewpoint, if any, on an otherwise permissible subject;

17 (C) Provision of a method, based on neutral criteria, for
18 the selection of public school speakers at public school events, including
19 graduation ceremonies;

20 (D) Procedures to ensure that a public school student
21 speaker does not engage in speech that is:

22 (i) Obscene;

23 (ii) Vulgar;

24 (iii) Offensively lewd; or

25 (iv) Indecent; and

26 (E)(i) Disclaimer that a public school student speaker's
27 speech does not reflect the endorsement, sponsorship, position, or expression
28 of the public school district.

29 (ii) The disclaimer under subdivision (c)(2)(E)(i)
30 of this section may be stated:

31 (a) In writing; or

32 (b) Orally.

33 (iii) The disclaimer under subdivision (c)(2)(E)(i)
34 of this section shall be provided:

35 (a) At all public school graduation
36 ceremonies; and

1 (b) At any other public school event at which
2 a public school student speaker speaks publicly.

3 (d)(1) A public school student may express his or her religious
4 viewpoint, if any, in the following contexts without discrimination based on
5 the religious content, if any:

6 (A) Homework;

7 (B) Classwork;

8 (C) Artwork; and

9 (D) Other written or oral assignments.

10 (2) A public school student's homework, classwork, artwork, or
11 other written or oral assignments shall be graded and judged:

12 (A) By ordinary academic standards of substance and
13 relevance; and

14 (B) Against other conventional, pedagogical topics as
15 identified by a public school district.

16 (3) A public school student shall not be penalized or rewarded
17 based on the religious content, if any, of his or her homework, classwork,
18 artwork, or other written or oral assignments.

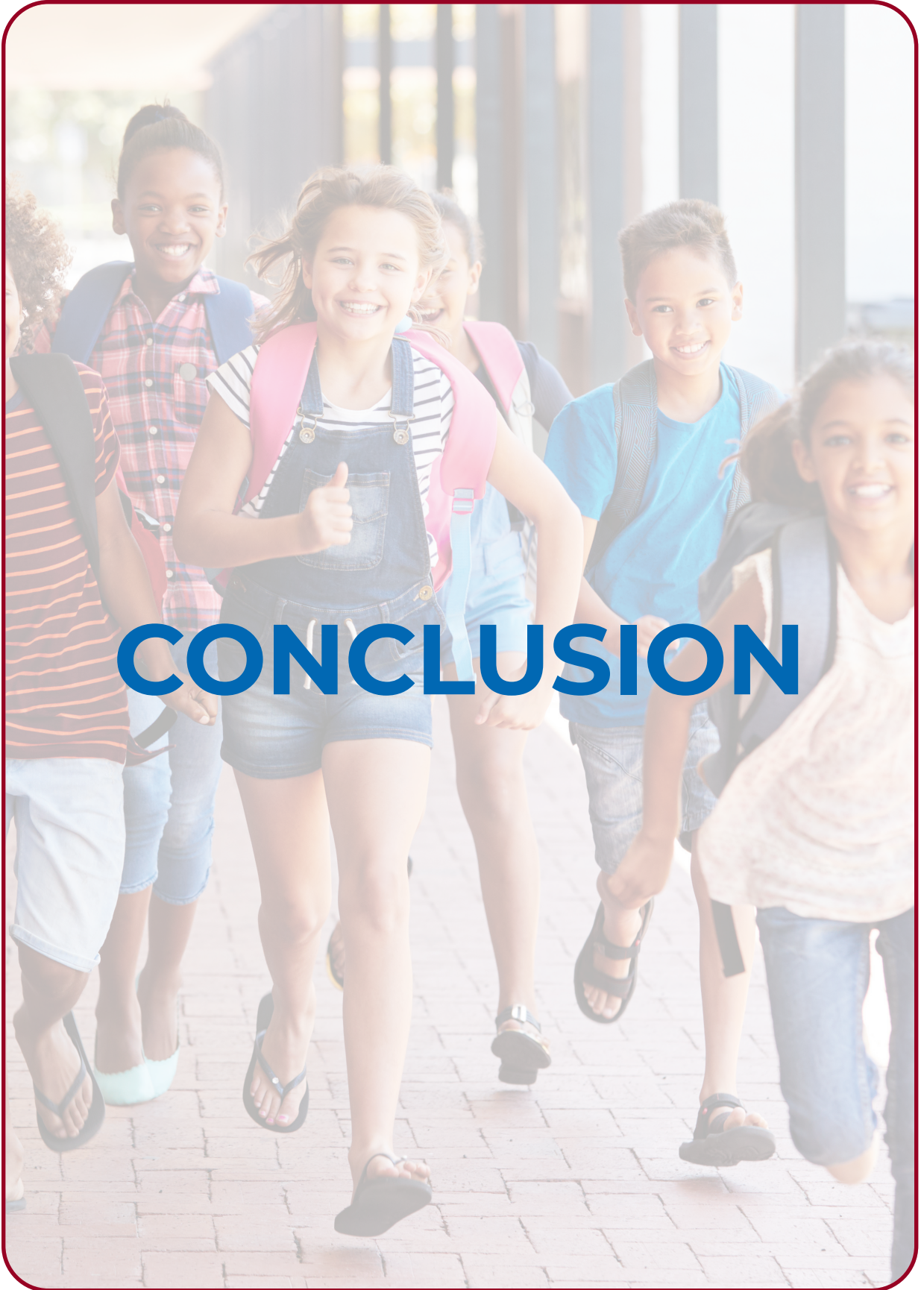
19 (e) In the event that the legality or constitutionality of this act is
20 challenged in a court of law, the Attorney General may:

21 (1) Prepare and present a legal defense of this act; or

22 (2)(A) Request that First Liberty Institute prepare and present
23 a legal defense of this act.

24 (B) A request that First Liberty Institute prepare and
25 present a legal defense of this act shall not be subject to § 25-16-702.

26
27
28
29
30 **APPROVED: 4/12/23**



Conclusion

While nothing in this document should be regarded as legal advice, it is clear by observation and common knowledge that various public schools around the country are legally exercising religious freedom by implementing some or possibly all of the activities covered here. It is always best to consult with national legal advocacy organizations that specialize in navigating religious issues at school if you have any doubt about the constitutionality of any religious activity at your school.

Court rulings against religious practice at school and the threat of legal action by anti-Christian organizations like the ACLU and the Freedom From Religion Foundation should no longer be an excuse for people of faith giving up on advancing religious freedom and the free exercise of religion in public schools. Often, these organizations specialize in empty threats that deprive students of exercising their First Amendment rights.

Over the years, the courts have affirmed the right of students to express their faith at school. In addition, the Arkansas Legislature has passed laws that affirm these religious freedoms. For example, the study of the Bible as an academic course is legal in every public school. The reading and posting of religious quotes of historical figures, the day of prayer for students, and the mandatory minute of silence at the beginning of the school day are all clearly spelled out.

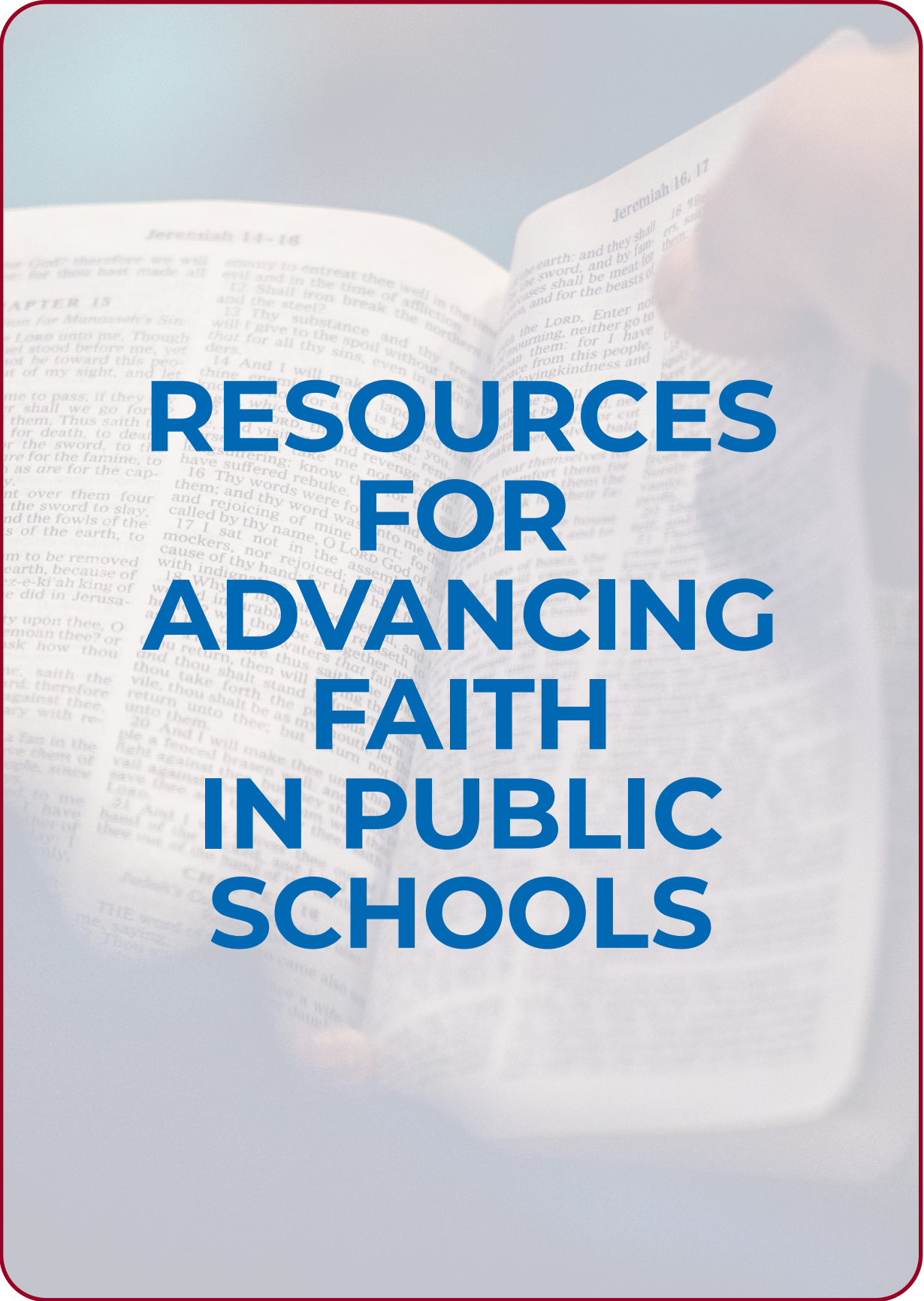
It is clear that students have the right to bring their Bible to school, pray around the flagpole, form religious clubs, and engage voluntarily in activities that align with their faith. Students can give other students a Bible or other religious text. They can discuss their faith with others. They can share their faith in Christ with other students during free time. It is even legal for schools to allow students to leave campus for religious instruction at a church or elsewhere during the school day.

Teachers and administrators can also do much more to support students' religious freedom at school. For example, a history teacher could read various religious quotes of historical figures in class any time. A science teacher can teach and discuss the various theories of creation, including the biblical account. An art teacher can show and discuss various religiously themed paintings and other works of art. A music teacher can include religiously themed songs in a choir performance. A government teacher can discuss the ways our secular government reflects the same patterns as principles set forth in the Judeo-Christian heritage. A literature teacher can have students read portions of the New Testament as a reading assignment. A librarian can purchase religiously themed books or subscribe to religious publications and include them in the library's collection. A principal or superintendent could work with churches and community organizations to place "In God We Trust" posters in every classroom as permitted by Arkansas law. A local school board can pass a resolution declaring the school to be a friendly and welcoming place for all religious faiths.

Parents and church leaders can work with students to help them plan and conduct religious activities at school the same as they can help with activities like the prom, a junior high dance, a fall festival, or talent show.

Unfortunately, groups like the ACLU have created a narrative that religious faith is illegal at school. Sadly, some Christians believe this myth. This widespread misunderstanding and lack of information on how much faith can be expressed at school has created a "faith desert" at many of our schools where Pride Month, Earth Day, and Critical Theory are celebrated and faith in God is absent or maligned.

Faith will continue to be absent from public schools until people of faith take action and exercise their religious freedom at school.



RESOURCES FOR ADVANCING FAITH IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Helpful Resources for Advancing Faith in Public Schools

Many of these organizations specialize in certain areas of religious freedom at school. Most can provide helpful resources and guidance as you seek to implement certain programs listed in this guide.

MOMENT OF SILENCE IN SCHOOLS

Gateways to Better Education

P.O. Box 514
Lake Forest, CA 92609
(800) 929-1163
info@gtbe.org

RELEASED TIME FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

School Ministries

101 Rice Bent Way, #6
Columbia, SC 29229
(803) 772-5224
info@SchoolMinistries.org
www.SchoolMinistries.org

Lifewise Academy

PO Box 1179
Hilliard, OH 43026
(740) 267-4809
www.lifewise.org

Released Time

Religious Education
www.ReleasedTime.org

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

National Day of Prayer Task Force

P.O. Box 64225
Colorado Springs, CO 80962
(719) 559-9560
www.NationalDayOfPrayer.org

ACADEMIC STUDY OF THE BIBLE

National Council for Bible Curriculum in Public Schools

P.O. Box 9743
Greensboro, NC 27429
(336) 921-0070

RELIGIOUS QUOTES OF HISTORICAL FIGURES

Wallbuilders

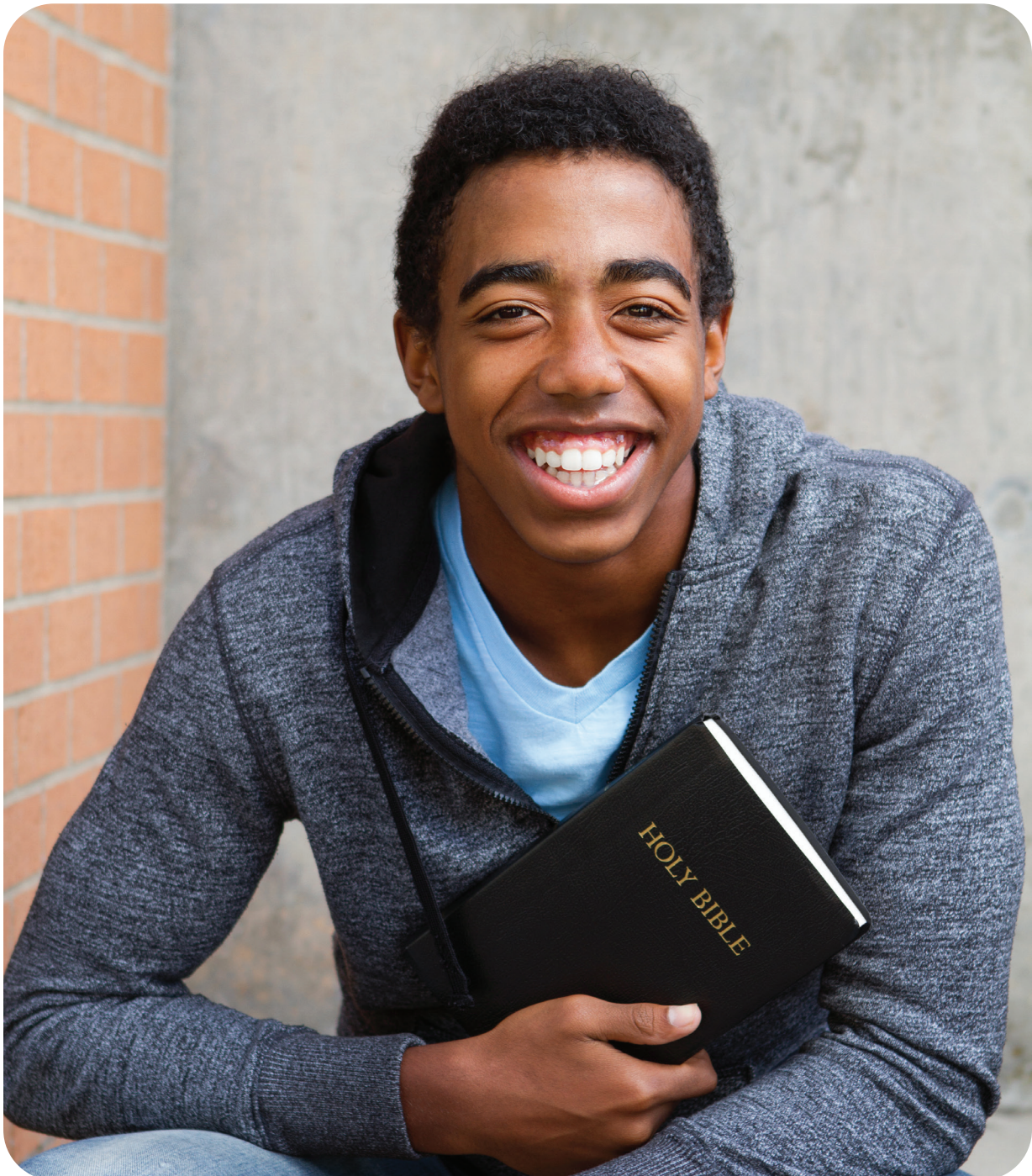
P.O. Box 397

Aledo, TX 76008

(817) 441-6044

www.wallbuilders.com/

wbcustomerservice@wallbuilders.com



GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION OF A DAY OF PRAYER FOR STUDENTS

Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders

500 Woodlane Street
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 682-2345
governor.arkansas.gov/online-services/contact-the-governor

SEE YOU AT THE POLE

See You at the Pole

P.O. Box 60134
Fort Worth, TX 76115
(817) 447-7526
syatp@syatp.com
www.syatp.com

IN GOD WE TRUST MOTTO POSTERS

American Family Association

PO Drawer 2440
Tupelo, MS 38803
(877) 927-4917
resources.afa.net/in-god-we-trust-poster-40th-anniversary-edition

An American Speaks

P.O. Box 3037
Little Rock, AR 72203
(501) 725-0219
anamericanspeaks.com
toni@anamericanspeaks.com

Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation

524 Johnstown Road
Chesapeake, VA 23322
(757) 546-2190
cpcfonline.com

ARKANSAS BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Family Council

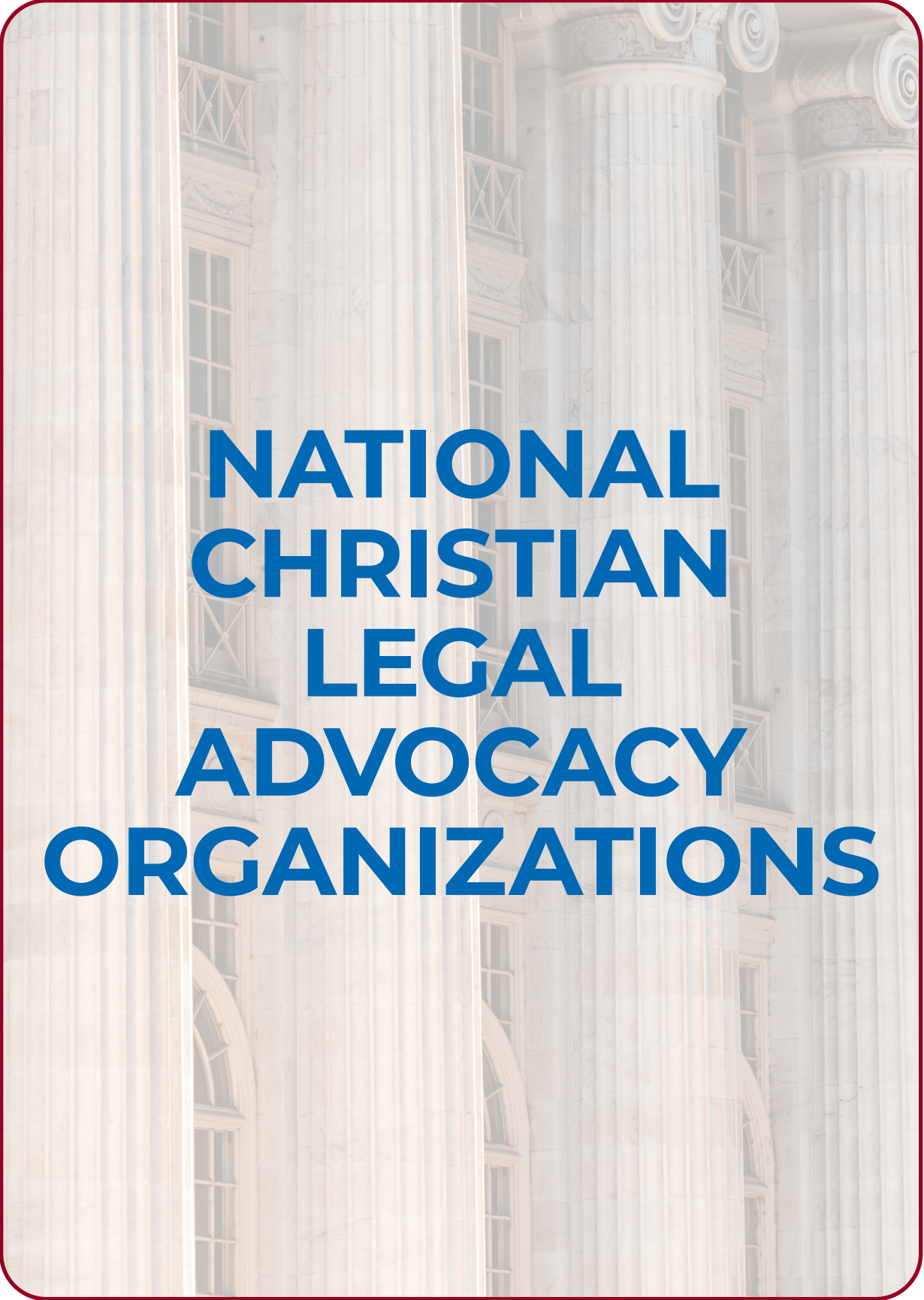
414 South Pulaski, Suite 2
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 375-7000
www.FamilyCouncil.org
www.info@FamilyCouncil.org

An American Speaks

P.O. Box 3037
Little Rock, AR 72203
(501) 725-0219
anamericanspeaks.com
toni@anamericanspeaks.com

Arkansas Faith and Ethics Council

P.O. Box 25112
Little Rock, AR 72221-5112
(501) 837-1688
llp@arfaith.org
<https://arfaith.org/>

The background of the page is a faded, light-colored image of a classical building facade. It features several tall, fluted columns and arched windows with decorative elements. The image is framed by a thin, dark red border with rounded corners.

NATIONAL CHRISTIAN LEGAL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

National Christian Legal Advocacy Organizations

Several national organizations specialize in advising people about their religious freedom rights at school and elsewhere. Many of these organizations employ a team of attorneys who can defend an individual, a school, a church, or business when their religious freedoms are threatened—sometimes at no cost. Contact any of these organizations if you need advice regarding a particular religious activity at school or if your current religious practices at school are being challenged by the ACLU, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, or individuals in your community who oppose the exercise of faith at school.

Advocates for Faith and Freedom

25026 Las Brisas Rd
Murrieta, CA 92562
(888) 588-6888
info@faith-freedom.com
faith-freedom.com

Alliance Defending Freedom

15100 N. 90th Street
Scottsdale, AZ 85260
(800) 835-5233
adfflegal.org

American Center for Law and Justice

P.O. Box 90555
Washington, DC 20090-0555
(800) 342-2255
aclj.org

Christian Legal Society

P.O. Box 7712
McLean, VA 22106-7712
(703) 642-1070
clshq@clsnet.org
www.christianlegalsociety.org

Liberty Counsel

P.O. Box 540774
Orlando, FL 32854
(407) 875-1776
<https://lc.org/>

National Legal Foundation

P.O. Box 64427
Virginia Beach, VA 23467-4427
(757) 463-6133
email@nationallegalfoundation.org
nationallegalfoundation.org

Pacific Justice Institute

P.O. Box 276600
Sacramento, CA 95827-6600
Phone: (916) 857-6900
<https://pacificjustice.org/>
info@pji.org
(916) 857-6900

United States Justice Foundation

41810 N. Venture Dr. Building F
Phoenix, AZ 85086
(202) 370-6366
(760) 741-8086
usjf.net/contact



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RESOURCES

Religious Freedom Resources

Religious freedom at school is a broader and more complicated issue than the information contained in this toolkit. Thankfully, several national organizations have published some excellent information that will help anyone interested in religious freedom know how to exercise their rights.

FIRST LIBERTY

2001 West Plano Parkway, Suite 1600
Plano, TX 75075
(972) 941-4444

First Liberty is a nationwide non-profit dedicated to protecting Americans of all faiths' First Amendment religious freedoms. They have produced several toolkits on religious freedom in a variety of settings, linked below. On the topic of faith in schools, they have toolkits designed for students, teachers, and religious schools regarding the legality of various forms of religious expression.

Religious Liberty Protection Toolkit for Students and Teachers



Religious Liberty Protection Toolkit for Religious Schools



ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM

15100 N. 90th Street
Scottsdale, AZ 85260
(480) 444-0020
info@adflegal.org

Alliance Defending Freedom is one of the leading Christian law firms committed to protecting religious freedom, free speech, marriage and family, parental rights, and the sanctity of life. They also have a toolkit designed to inform students K–12 about their constitutionally protected religious rights.

Students Rights Handbook



FAMILY POLICY ALLIANCE

8675 Explorer Drive, Suite 112

Colorado Springs, CO 80920

(866) 655-4545

Family Policy Alliance (FPA) and Family Policy Alliance Foundation (FPAF) are Christian ministries that defend faith and protect families by organizing, educating and mobilizing the social conservative movement in America. They publish a parent's guide to what's happening in children's classrooms and practical steps they can take to protect their children.

Back to School for Parents



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Family Council is a conservative non-profit organization based in Little Rock, Arkansas. Founded in 1989 by Jerry Cox, its mission is to promote, protect, and strengthen traditional family values in Arkansas. Located in downtown Little Rock near the State Capitol Jerry and his staff work with lawmakers to pass legislation that reflects a biblical world-view. In addition they conduct media interviews, speak in churches and at other public events, and they produce voter's guides to help citizens cast an informed vote. Learn more about Family Council at www.FamilyCouncil.org or stop by 414 South Pulaski, Suite 2 in Little Rock to see our work firsthand.

Family Council | 414 South Pulaski, Suite 2, Little Rock, AR 72201 | (501) 375-7000