SB14

202111-2

By Senator Melson

RFD: Education Policy

First Read: 05-MAR-19

PFD: 01/23/2019
ENROLLED, An Act,

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

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

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

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

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


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

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

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

(2) Familiarize students with the following:
   a. The contents of the Bible and religious history.
   b. The history of the Bible and religious history.
   c. The literary style and structure of the Bible.
   d. The influence of the Bible on law, history, government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values, and cultures.

(b) A teacher of a course offered pursuant to this act shall comply with applicable law and all federal and state guidelines regarding maintaining religious neutrality and accommodating the diverse religious views, traditions, and perspectives of students in the school.
(c) A teacher of a course offered pursuant to this act may not endorse, favor, promote, disfavor, or show hostility toward any particular religion or nonreligious faith or religious perspective.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Speaker of the House of Representatives

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

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

Patrick Harris,
Secretary.

House of Representatives
Passed: 23-MAY-19, as amended

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

By: Senator Melson