

1 HB170  
2 124211-1  
3 By Representative Bridges  
4 RFD: Education Policy  
5 First Read: 08-MAR-11

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8 SYNOPSIS: Existing law does not provide for the  
9 display of important historical documents in the  
10 public schools of the state.

11 This bill would create the "Historic  
12 Documents Act."

13 This bill would provide extensively for  
14 legislative intent and purpose.

15 This bill would require the display of the  
16 Magna Carta, the Ten Commandments, the Declaration  
17 of Independence, and the Bill of Rights in an  
18 appropriate place in each public school building in  
19 the state, in a manner that complies with  
20 constitutional requirements, would permit the same  
21 display in each public school classroom, and would  
22 require the State Department of Education to  
23 promulgate necessary rules and regulations.

24 This bill would provide for the mounting or  
25 framing requirements of the reproduction documents.

26  
27 A BILL

1 TO BE ENTITLED

2 AN ACT

3  
4 Relating to public schools; to create the "Historic  
5 Documents Act"; to provide for legislative intent and purpose;  
6 to require the display of the Magna Carta, the Ten  
7 Commandments, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of  
8 Rights in an appropriate place in each public school building  
9 in a manner that complies with constitutional requirements;  
10 and to require the State Department of Education to promulgate  
11 necessary rules.

12 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

13 Section 1. This act shall be known as the "Historic  
14 Documents Act."

15 Section 2. (a) The Legislature finds all of the  
16 following:

17 (1) That the founding of the United States of  
18 America and the State of Alabama was based on important legal  
19 and cultural concepts which were embodied in historic  
20 documents.

21 (2) That the concepts of a free and civil society  
22 are based on the lessons learned in the history of mankind and  
23 which have been recorded in various historical documents.

24 (3) That implicit in the order of liberty is a  
25 recognition of the source of that liberty and the availability  
26 of that source for viewing and consideration.

1           (4) That throughout the history of mankind there  
2 have been different concepts of government, religion, and  
3 personal liberty, many of which were alien to or in conflict  
4 with others, but the United States of America and the State of  
5 Alabama were founded upon the recognition of the basic freedom  
6 of man from improper control of government, the rights to  
7 personal liberty, choice of religion, and self-determination,  
8 subject only to necessary and proper moral and ethical  
9 restraints provided for in a representative form of  
10 government.

11           (5) That the Magna Carta was signed by King John of  
12 England in 1215 to remove oppressive and improper government  
13 and to recognize individual liberties, serving as a model and  
14 providing an example for the United States Constitution and  
15 many state constitutions, including the Constitution of  
16 Alabama of 1901, which contains those concepts of government  
17 and freedom first drafted by an English speaking people.

18           (6) That the Ten Commandments of the Holy Scriptures  
19 are a moral statement of right and wrong which have served as  
20 moral guideposts for western civilization, containing the  
21 basis for many of the criminal laws of the United States and  
22 the State of Alabama.

23           (7) That the Declaration of Independence is the  
24 first unified statement of the American people declaring the  
25 equality of citizens and the individual freedoms they should  
26 expect in their form of government, and is an additional step

1 in the progress of mankind to establish a right, proper, and  
2 moral order.

3 (8) That the Bill of Rights encompasses the first 10  
4 amendments to the United States Constitution which implicitly  
5 state the individual rights of citizens of the United States  
6 of America and every state which is a part of the union,  
7 including the State of Alabama, protecting them from any  
8 extravagance of government.

9 (9) That taken together, these historic documents  
10 provide a basis for understanding our form of government,  
11 society, and culture. The posting of these documents in the  
12 public schools of Alabama will make available to the inquiring  
13 minds of students these concepts upon which this great nation  
14 and this great state are based. The Legislature believes that  
15 these documents provide important wisdom and insight for the  
16 future productive citizens of this state.

17 (b) Based on the findings in subsection (a), it is  
18 the intent of the Legislature to accomplish all of the  
19 following:

20 (1) That public school students in the State of  
21 Alabama have readily available to them the important  
22 historical truths and wisdom contained in the Magna Carta, the  
23 Ten Commandments, the Declaration of Independence, and the  
24 Bill of Rights.

25 (2) By requiring the posting of these documents in  
26 appropriate and significant places on public school premises,

1 that this information is readily available and the importance  
2 of the information known to public school students.

3 (3) That these important historical truths be known  
4 and made available to students in order to expand their  
5 understanding of the form of government and the nature of  
6 their rights in this great country and in this great state.

7 (c) The Legislature further recognizes that there  
8 are constitutional requirements which include, among other  
9 things, the necessity of laws having secular purposes, not  
10 promoting or inhibiting religion, not causing entanglement  
11 with religion, and not endorsing religion. The Legislature  
12 further recognizes that while parts of the documents which the  
13 Legislature herein requires to be displayed contain references  
14 to a deity or other religious references or may have arisen as  
15 a result of religious belief, it is not the purpose of the  
16 Legislature to promote religious, theological, or  
17 philosophical beliefs in any way, but to provide to public  
18 school students the very documents which form the basis for  
19 the people they are, regardless of any religious, theological,  
20 or philosophical implications; it is not the purpose of the  
21 Legislature to require any public school student to accept or  
22 deny the truth of any religious, theological, or philosophical  
23 belief, but simply to recognize those documents which most  
24 clearly state the historical basis for the United States of  
25 America and the State of Alabama.

26 Section 3. (a) Each school in this state that is  
27 supported in whole or in part by public funds shall display in

1 a prominent place in the school building each day that school  
2 is in session appropriately mounted or framed reproduction  
3 documents of the Magna Carta, the Ten Commandments, the  
4 Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights. The  
5 documents shall be displayed in a manner that complies with  
6 constitutional requirements, including, but not limited to,  
7 being displayed together at all times and also, the documents  
8 may be intermingled with other historical or educational  
9 items, or both, in a larger display within the school.

10 (b) The State Department of Education shall  
11 promulgate necessary rules to implement this section.

12 Section 4. This act shall become effective on the  
13 first day of the third month following its passage and  
14 approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.