

1 HB511
2 193158-1
3 By Representatives Ingram, Mooney, Butler, Moore (B),
4 Nordgren, Hanes, Millican, Williams (JW), Farley, Sanderford,
5 Faulkner, Sessions, Weaver, Pettus, Rich, Tuggle, Hurst,
6 Johnson (R), Johnson (K), Shedd, Martin, Greer, Lee, Crawford,
7 Brown, Moore (M), Rogers, Holmes (M), Ledbetter, Wood, Howard,
8 Buskey, Bracy, Lovvorn, Drake, Carns, Hill, Ellis, Boyd,
9 Shiver, Beckman, Sells, Lawrence, Hollis, McClammy, Beech,
10 Morrow, Fincher, Wingo, Williams (JD), Ford, Boothe, Davis,
11 Baker, McCutcheon and Poole
12 RFD: Education Policy
13 First Read: 13-MAR-18

2
3
4
5
6
7
8 SYNOPSIS: This bill would allow public schools to
9 offer elective courses focusing on the study of the
10 Bible in grades six to 12, would provide for review
11 to ensure that the courses do not violate the First
12 Amendment, and would provide immunity for teachers
13 who teach the material in good faith and with
14 proper historical context.

15 This bill would also require the State Board
16 of Education to adopt rules and policies to
17 implement the requirements of the bill.

18
19 A BILL
20 TO BE ENTITLED
21 AN ACT
22

23 Relating to education; to allow public schools to
24 offer elective courses focusing on the study of the Bible in
25 grades six to 12; to require that the courses do not violate
26 the First Amendment to the United States Constitution; to
27 provide immunity for teachers who teach the material in good

1 faith and with proper historical context; and to require the
2 State Board of Education to adopt rules and policies to
3 implement the requirements of the bill.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

5 Section 1. (a) A public school may offer elective
6 courses in the study of the Bible in grades six to 12,
7 inclusive, as follows:

8 (1) A social studies course on the Old Testament of
9 the Bible.

10 (2) A social studies course on the New Testament of
11 the Bible.

12 (3) A social studies course on the Old Testament and
13 the New Testament of the Bible.

14 (b) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules
15 and policies necessary for implementing the requirements of
16 this act.

17 (c) Before a public school offers an elective course
18 in the study of the Bible under this act, a legal review of
19 the course material shall be conducted to ensure that the
20 course material does not violate the First Amendment to the
21 United States Constitution.

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

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

1 (2) Familiarize students with the following:

2 a. The contents of the Bible.

3 b. The history of the Bible.

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

5 d. The influence of the Bible on law, history,
6 government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values,
7 and cultures.

8 (b) A student may not be required to use a specific
9 translation of the Bible and may use as the basic textbook a
10 different translation of the Bible from the one chosen by the
11 State Board of Education.

12 (c) A teacher of a course offered pursuant to this
13 act shall comply with applicable law and all federal and state
14 guidelines regarding maintaining religious neutrality and
15 accommodating the diverse religious views, traditions, and
16 perspectives of students in the school.

17 (d) A teacher of a course offered pursuant to this
18 act may not endorse, favor, promote, disfavor, or show
19 hostility toward any particular religion or nonreligious faith
20 or religious perspective.

21 (e) A teacher of a course offered pursuant to this
22 act shall be immune from civil liability and disciplinary
23 action for the contents of the course if the instruction is
24 given with proper historical context and in good faith.

25 (f) The State Board of Education, in complying with
26 this section, may not violate the United States Constitution,
27 federal law, the Constitution of Alabama of 1901, state law,

1 or any administrative rule or regulation of the United States
2 Department of Education or the State Board of Education.

3 Section 3. This act shall become effective on the
4 first day of the third month following its passage and
5 approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.