



SYNOPSIS:

This bill would require each local board of education to display, in specified areas, the Ten Commandments along with a statement of context and excerpts from certain foundational documents from our Nation's history, subject to the availability of donated funds or displays.

This bill would provide that no local board of education is required to use its funds to comply with the display requirement and that it may accept donations to comply with the display requirement.

This bill would require the State Department of Education to identify and publicize free resources that local boards of education may use to comply with the display requirement.

This bill would also authorize the State Board of Education to adopt rules.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to public K-12 schools; to provide legislative findings; to require each local board of education to display



the Ten Commandments and certain other documents related to the formation of this nation, subject to the availability of donations; to provide for the use of donations to comply with the display requirement; to authorize the State Board of Education to adopt rules.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) The Ten Commandments are a key part of the Judeo-Christian religious and moral tradition that shaped Western Civilization and ultimately the founding of the United States. In particular, because they include what John Quincy Adams described as both "civil and municipal" provisions as well as "moral and religious" provisions, the Ten Commandments have historical significance as one of the foundations of our legal system. Teaching students about the Ten Commandments promotes historical understanding and helps to foster a common cultural heritage and awareness.

(b) Documents created to shape civil society during the founding era of this nation include direct and indirect references to God and religion. These documents include the following:

(1) The Mayflower Compact of 1620, America's first written constitution, was a covenant made among the pilgrims with "Almighty God" to "form a civil body politic." The Mayflower Compact was the first purely American document of self-government and affirmed the link between civil society and God.



57 (2) The Declaration of Independence (1776) described
58 all men as being "created equal" and "endowed by their Creator
59 with certain unalienable Rights."

60 (3) The United States Constitution (1787) stated in its
61 preamble that one of its purposes was to secure "the Blessings
62 of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity" and closed with a
63 reference to the date of execution as the Seventeenth Day of
64 September in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred
65 and eighty-seven.

66 (4) The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 provided a method
67 of admitting new states to the Union from territories as the
68 country expanded westward. The Northwest Ordinance "extended
69 the fundamental principles of civil and religious liberty" to
70 the territories and stated that "[r]eligion, morality, and
71 knowledge, being necessary to good government and the
72 happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall
73 forever be encouraged."

74 (c) References to God and religion in public documents
75 and other public contexts did not end at the founding but
76 rather have occurred throughout our nation's history without
77 any serious claim that such references violate the
78 Establishment Clause. Examples include displays associated
79 with the Ten Commandments in the Supreme Court of the United
80 States, the Library of Congress, the Ronald Reagan
81 International Trade Building, and the National Archives.
82 Public references to God have occurred repeatedly over the
83 nation's history. No outcry followed Abraham Lincoln's
84 reference to God in his Gettysburg Address in 1863. Our



coinage has born the phrase, "IN GOD WE TRUST," since 1865. Prayers have opened our legislative sessions for hundreds of years. In 1932, Congress adopted our National Anthem and included in the last verse, "In God is our trust." In 1952, Congress proclaimed a "National Day of Prayer." In 1954, Congress added "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance. The display of the Ten Commandments as provided in this act, with an appropriate context statement and integrated with the approved public school social studies curriculum, is consistent with these historical practices and understandings and, at a minimum, furthers the same interests as the interests served by these historical practices and understandings.

(d) The 2024 social studies curriculum approved by the Alabama State Board of Education (Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies) provides: "Social studies education in Alabama aims to prepare students to become knowledgeable, engaged, and responsible citizens in society. Social studies reflects the achievements, struggles, interactions, and endeavors that have characterized human society as it has changed over time and place to shape the world today. The disciplines of social studies include, but are not limited to: Anthropology, Archaeology, Civics, Economics, Geography, Government, History, Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, and Sociology." Display of the Ten Commandments with an appropriate context statement is essential to the fulfillment of the mandate of the State Board of Education in the education of students in the areas of Civics, Government, History, Philosophy,



Religion, and Sociology.

(e) Two generations of Alabama students have attended public schools in an era governed by the now-abandoned test articulated in *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971), for compliance with the Establishment Clause of the United States Constitution. Assuring restoration to the classroom of historical truths surrounding the founding of our nation, including those truths that "partake of the religious," *Kennedy v. Bremerton*, 597 U.S. 507, 535 (2022), is vital to remedying the legal error of *Lemon v. Kurtzman* and to securing a complete education of our students.

(f) It is the intent of the Legislature that this act does not create an unfunded mandate on any public-school governing authority. Local boards of education are encouraged to use documents that are printed and made available to the schools free of charge.

Section 2. (a) Beginning January 1, 2026, and subject to the availability of donated funds or donated displays pursuant to subsection (c) as determined by the State Superintendent of Education, each local board of education shall display a poster or framed document that meets the requirements of subsection (b) in: (i) an entry way or other common area in the school, such as the cafeteria or school library; and (ii) in classrooms where United States history is routinely taught according to the Alabama Course of Study.

(b) The poster or framed document required by subsection (a) shall meet each of the following requirements:

(1) The poster or framed document shall be at least 11



141 inches by 14 inches in size.

142 (2) The layout and design of the poster or framed
143 document shall be approved by the State Superintendent of
144 Education.

145 (3) The poster or framed document shall contain the
146 following content:

147 Historical Truths: The Ten Commandments and America's
148 Founding Documents

149 The Ten Commandments are a key part of the
150 Judeo-Christian religious and moral tradition that shaped
151 Western Civilization and ultimately the founding of the United
152 States. There are many versions of the Ten Commandments. The
153 one that follows is a common translation but not the only
154 translation.

155 You shall not have other gods before me

156 You shall not make idols

157 You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in
158 vain

159 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy

160 Honor your father and your mother

161 You shall not kill

162 You shall not commit adultery

163 You shall not steal

164 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor

165 You shall not covet

166 In 1813, future U.S. President John Quincy Adams wrote
167 in a letter to his son that, "The Law given from Sinai" - in
168 other words, the Ten Commandments - "was a civil and municipal



as well as a moral and religious Code." He noted that many of its provisions "were of universal applications - Laws essential to the existence of men in Society, and most of which have been enacted by every Nation which ever possessed any Code of Law."

The Alabama Constitution provides that "no religion shall be established by law." The purpose of this poster, however, is simply to acknowledge the historical role of the Ten Commandments - and the broader Judeo-Christian tradition - in shaping American civil society.

The Mayflower Compact of 1620, America's first written constitution, contained a "covenant with 'Almighty God'" by pilgrims to America to "form a civil body politic."

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 "extended the fundamental principles of civil and religious liberty" to the western territories becoming states and provided that "[r]eligion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."

The Declaration of Independence (1776) described all men as being "created equal" and acknowledged that they are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights."

The United States Constitution (1787) in its preamble stated one of its purposes to be securing "the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

(c) This section may not be construed to require a local board of education to spend its funds to purchase the displays required by this section. To fund the displays free



197 of charge, a local board of education may accept donated funds
198 to purchase the displays or may accept donated displays.

199 (d) The State Department of Education shall identify
200 appropriate resources for local boards of education to comply
201 with this section free of charge. Once identified, the
202 department shall list the free resources on the department's
203 website.

204 (e) The State Board of Education may adopt rules to
205 implement this section.

206 Section 3. This act shall become effective on October
207 1, 2025.