

HOUSE BILL 1905

By Hill M

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 2, Part 1; Title 49, Chapter 5, Part 56 and Title 49, Chapter 6, Part 10, relative to the inclusion of religion in instruction and curriculum.

WHEREAS, all Tennessee children should be provided accurate and comprehensive instruction in social studies; and

WHEREAS, religious events, beliefs, and figures have played a significant role in world history, including the founding of the United States and the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution of the State of Tennessee declares that all men have a natural and inalienable right to worship according to their own conscience, and that no human authority can control or interfere with the rights of conscience; and

WHEREAS, schools may not indoctrinate, promote, or show bias to a religion; now, therefore,

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

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 6, Part 10, is amended by adding the following language as a new, appropriately designated section:

(a) The inclusion of religion in textbooks, instructional materials, curriculum, or academic standards shall be for educational purposes only and shall not be used to promote or establish any religion or religious belief.

(b) Prior to the 2016-2017 school year, each local school board shall adopt a policy regarding the appropriate inclusion of religion in local curriculum and instructional materials; provided, that an opportunity for public comment shall be provided by each local school board before adoption of the policy.

(c) Each LEA shall make publicly available a syllabus for all grade six (6) through twelve (12) social studies, science, math, and English language arts courses. The syllabus shall at a minimum include:

(1) A course calendar that includes standards, objectives, and topics covered;

(2) Major assignments required; and

(3) Procedures for parental access to instructional materials in accordance with § 49-6-7003.

(d) The state board of education shall initiate a revision process for the social studies standards adopted in 2013.

(1) The revision process shall be in accordance with § 49-1-313.

(2) The state board shall ensure that the revised standards do not promote religion and do not amount to indoctrination or proselytism.

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 5, Part 56, is amended by adding the following language as a new, appropriately designated section:

Teacher training institutions shall provide candidates with instruction on what is constitutionally permissible when teaching religious content and strategies for dealing with religious content in curriculum that are educationally sound, fair, neutral, and objective.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.