

January 8, 2016

Senator Sheryl Nuxoll
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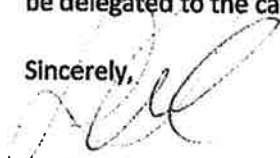
I have been asked to comment on the proposed legislation to amend Idaho Code 33-1604 concerning the reading of the Bible in Public Schools—specifically regarding the phrase: "no books, papers, tracts or documents of a political, sectarian or denominational character shall be used or introduced in any schools established under the provision of this article ..."

In response to the above code, let me state that the Bible is not a "denominational" text, but is better understood as an inter-denominational or even a nondenominational text. It is read and used by various groups regardless of their denominational affiliation. It is read and accepted by both Protestants and Catholics. It is held dear by Orthodox, Reformed, Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Mormon, Episcopalian, Pentecostal, Church of God, Seventh-day Adventist and nondenominational groups alike (just to name a few). And while it is true that a few specific denominations prefer a specific translation of the Bible—all groups, regardless of their affiliation, acknowledge their use of the Bible, and all understand that the various English translations are exactly that—translations that all come primarily from an original Hebrew or Greek text.

Furthermore, the Bible is more than an inter-denominational text. It is also an inter-faith text. Jews, Messianic Jews, Protestants, Catholics, and even Muslims use the Bible (or portions of the Bible) in their study. For example, Jews refer to "the Books of Law and the Prophets" which are contained in the Old Testament. Messianic Jews use the entirety of the Old and New Testament. Even Muslims recognize "the Taurah, Zabur, and the Injil." These include the Pentateuch (the Torah) and the Book of Psalms from the Old Testament, and all the New Testament books, specifically highlighting the Gospels.

In addition, it is also a secularly revered text which is quoted and referred to by nearly every walk of life—religious or otherwise. It is quoted by historical works of literature, nonreligious books and even very secular magazines. It is mentioned on the airwaves and by Hollywood. The Bible finds its way into the public square, the courtroom, and certainly into private life—even among those who do not profess faith of any kind. Courses are regularly taught on college campuses across our nation entitled, "The Bible as Literature." The Bible is the consistent "best seller" year after year—decade after decade. It is the most widely read and often studied book in the history of mankind by no short measure. Its wide use and wide acceptance cannot be delegated to the category of a denominational text.

Sincerely,


Dr. Steven A. Crane