

Senator Marshall
Attachment 1

SB1342 Bible use in schools

PURPOSE (opening statement)

SB 1342 allows the Bible to be used as a reference in public schools by codifying in law a practice which is already being allowed. This legislation will relieve any fear or confusion for students, teachers, and parents who desire to use the Bible for reference purposes as it occurs naturally in different subjects. It is the intent that other religious works imbedded in the scope and sequence of learning can also be permissively discussed under this rule.

No one is required to use any religious texts, doctrine cannot be taught, and there is no mandate for usage. In an environment often clouded by “political correctness”, SB 1342 eliminates confusion what our rights are and affirms free speech for our students and teachers.

Biblical literacy is essential to understand the history and origin of Western Civilization. Its influence is embedded in America’s founding documents, classical literature, the arts, and other disciplines. **The Bible is the document brought to North America by our nation’s first immigrants, used in our first public schools, and is the foundation of our Judeo-Christian heritage.**

Some perceive the Bible to be centric to only the Christian Faith. This is not true. It is referenced by Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and others. As such, it is integral to world history and literacy. If Biblical references were to be ignored in our education system, that would mean an accurate portrayal of history would also be ignored.

Included in your packet are 2 legal opinions. One from Michael Farris, Chancellor Emeritus of Patrick Henry College, and one from Matt Sharp, of the Alliance Defending Freedom. They are available on the phone to answer questions. I also have an opinion from Idaho attorney Christ Troupis. You will find that all of them agree that this proposed section of code DOES INDEED meet both Federal and State Constitutional muster. Also included in your

packet is a statement from Pastor Steve Crane, and an article from the ACLU affirming its opinion of Constitutionality.

OTHER STATES:

SB1342 was thoughtfully written using as a reference similar language approved by at least 9 other states. These include Arkansas 2013, Arizona 2012, Florida 2002, Kentucky 1990, Oklahoma 2010, Pennsylvania 1965, Tennessee 2008, and Texas 2007, Iowa, 1884.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, please understand by passing SB1342, Idaho is NOT charting new waters.

CONCLUSION – (Closing statement):

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee:

1. Senator Davis—did send an email
2. 3 opinions agree that it is constitutional—do you wish to talk to them
3. Matt Sharp reason
4. Swear oath of office on Bible
5. ACLU document in your file

I DO believe we share a desire to ensure Idaho students have optional access to an accurate portrayal of history. It is true, at least within my constituency, that many people believe our culture is suffering morale decline, and if so there could be a connection between that, and the fact that many of our young people have little to no knowledge of the historical roots of our nation.

Everyone should have the right to believe whatever they want to believe, and the only way that can happen is if a fair representation of history, literature and arts are available.

And I believe there is something else we agree on: Doctrine should not be taught in the public classroom. That is why SB1342 approaches this subject in similar fashion as Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Iowa: By ensuring doctrinal teaching is not allowed, and employing no mandates.

We pass legislation all the time to make sure that there is clarity in laws and rules. Why can't we have clarity in this issue?

If we don't pass this, then we are sending a message that there is still confusion on how to use religious texts for any purpose.