

Read by Representative
Paul Shepherd
Attachment 2

**STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF
"USE OF THE BIBLE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS" LEGISLATION (S. 1342)**

**Submitted by Evalyn Bennett of Salmon, Idaho
February 24, 2016**

I am providing this statement as one of the Idaho citizens who helped to write the "Use of the Bible in Public Schools" legislation you are considering. In June 2015 I presented a resolution advocating this proposed legislation to the Idaho Republicans Resolutions Committee. That resolution passed the Resolutions Committee and then passed the State Republicans Central Committee with only two dissenting votes. This indicates *extremely* strong state-wide support for this bill among Idaho Republicans.

The rationale for this legislation should also result in bipartisan -- even unanimous -- support. That rationale is as follows:

Two years ago I noticed that a statement in the Idaho Constitution, Article IX, Section 6 could be construed to prohibit public school use of political documents such as the U.S. Constitution and religious texts such as the Bible. That statement reads, "No books, papers, tracts or documents of a political, sectarian or denominational character shall be used in any schools established under the provisions of this article..." My specific concern was that this wording appears to restrict teachers' and students' freedom of speech - a right guaranteed under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. I sought advice about how to address this problem and was told that citizens could either seek to amend the Idaho Constitution or ask the legislature to pass clarifying legislation. I chose the clarifying legislation approach as being a sufficient remedy.

Given that Idaho public schools require students to take two semesters of U.S. government, I knew that the U.S. Constitution was not a prohibited political document. But I was concerned that the Bible might be a *de facto* censored document in Idaho public schools. This belief was confirmed during my presentation to the Resolutions Committee. I asked the committee and audience members present to raise their hands if they had been taught in an Idaho public school and **ever** used the Bible in a class. That collective assembly represented about 500 years of public schooling, yet only a few persons raised their hands.

This response indicates the Bible is not even being used in Idaho public school study of literature and history, two uses which have been clearly permitted by the U.S. Supreme Court.

As outlined in the "Sample Use of the Bible as a Reference Source" handout you have been provided, the Bible can be used in public school classes as a reference source for numerous topics of inquiry, including literature and history. Teachers can objectively present, and students can study this material without teaching "sectarian or religious tenets or doctrines," instruction which is prohibited under the Idaho Constitution, Article IX, Section 6.

Article XI, Section 1 declares that the sole purpose of public education in Idaho is to establish an informed citizenry that is capable of maintaining our republican form of government. This bill will allow students to become aware of the Bible's influence on law, history, government, literature, morals, value, and culture, thereby preparing students to function as responsible citizens after they graduate.

I urge you to pass S. 1342 so students and teachers can, without question, use the Bible as a reference source in public education. This use is critical to fulfill the mission of Idaho public schools. The clarifying legislation is also essential to affirm students' and teachers' right to freedom of speech, as protected by the U.S. Constitution. Please make it clear that the Bible is not a censored document.

SAMPLE USE OF THE BIBLE AS A REFERENCE SOURCE FOR IDAHO PUBLIC SCHOOL SUBJECTS

ART, ARCHITECTURE and MUSIC

Notable compositions such as Handel's *Messiah* use Bible verses in the lyrics. Various musical instruments are named in Bible passages (e.g., harp, lyre, cymbals). The Psalms were intended to be sung. Traditional spirituals of the American slave era are based on Bible concepts and passages.

Famous painters and sculptors chose subject matter from the Bible as the inspiration for their works (e.g., Michelangelo's Sistine chapel paintings, *David*, and *Moses*). Frescos and stained glass windows in numerous U.S. and European churches and cathedrals recount passages of the Bible through art.

Students interested in architecture could seek to construct a replica of the Tabernacle or Temple based on the instructions provided in Exodus 26 and I Kings 6.

ECONOMICS

The Bible contains information on numerous concepts related to economics, including property ownership, money, inheritance, occupations, work and rest, wealth and poverty, rewards, taxation, tithing, debt, creditors, borrowing, lending, usury, interest, repayment, cancellation of debt, working for a purpose other than personal gain, fraud, deeds of ownership, deposits of guarantee, fair wages, giving of alms, fair treatment of workers, caring for orphans and widows, service, and redemption.

ENGLISH and FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English words such as baptism and apostle come directly from the koine Greek of the New Testament, and an English translation of the Bible exemplifies perfect use of our language. The apostle Paul's letters utilize literary techniques such as persuasion, sarcasm, rhetorical questions, and quotations to communicate his message; students can learn from Paul's writings how to effectively incorporate these literary devices into their own compositions. Noah Webster, author of the first American dictionary, utilized the Bible to illustrate word meanings and usage. English and American classics such as *Everyman*, *Paradise Lost*, and *The Scarlet Letter* cannot be fully appreciated without an understanding of the Bible's teachings. The Bible was the primary "textbook" of the first schools in our nation; children learned to read from the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress*.

The Bible was written in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek), but has been translated into numerous languages. Comparing an English translation of the Bible to a foreign language translation is one way to become more proficient in a foreign language.

GOVERNMENT and LAW

The Bible is a source of information about ancient Israel's unique form of government called a theocracy. Deuteronomy records the Israelite nation's ancient legal system in great detail; this legal system is the foundation of our nation's current legal system

The Bible addresses numerous topics related to government such as civil and criminal law, citizenship, obedience, justice, civil trials (I Corinthians 6:1-8), slavery and freedom, making amends, condemnation,

grace, mercy, justification, mediation, punishment for criminal offenses, war, treaties, covenants, safety, refuge, and selection and authority of government officials (Romans 13:1-7).

HEALTH

The Bible discusses behavioral, dietary and sanitary prescriptions for personal health and relates instances of healing.

The Bible is filled with passages describing actions or mindsets which may result in mental health concerns or damaged interpersonal relationships: anger, grief/anguish, fear, dissatisfaction, betrayal, anxiety, pride, shame, vengeance, bitterness, dishonesty, alcohol abuse, gossip, cheating, despair, doubt, envy, hypocrisy, immorality, laziness, self-indulgence, slander, and worry.

Other Bible passages offer guidance for achieving mental health: hope, righteousness, comfort, peace, love, patience, faith, humility, modesty, honesty, friendship, compassion, forgiveness, confession and repentance, corrective education and discipline, devotion, self-discipline, endurance, perseverance, joy, fellowship, generosity, gladness, thanksgiving, hospitality, contentment, and satisfaction.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

The Bible contains passages related to betrothal; marriage; consequences of incest, rape, adultery, prostitution and polygamy; standards of sexuality morality; divorce; marital faithfulness; authority structure in the family; love and respect; responsibility; instruction of children; adoption; the nuclear family; the extended family (tribe); and the family of God.

MATH

The Old Testament and New Testament both record ancient units of measurement for distance, length, weight, and monetary value. A comparison of ancient and modern units of measure would expand students' world view and give them opportunities to practice mathematical conversion. In Daniel 5: 25-28, units of money convey a symbolic message to King Belshazzar of Babylon.

SCIENCE

Oceanography Matthew Maury was inspired to search for the "paths of the seas" referred to in Psalm 8:8. His scientific inquiry led to our modern understanding of ocean currents.

Anatomist and physiologist William Harvey sought to understand the meaning of Leviticus 17:11: "...the life of every creature is in its blood..." His work led to our understanding of the life-giving properties of blood and the essential function of the circulatory system.

The Bible explains that the earth is a sphere suspended in space (Job 26:7: "...he suspends the earth over nothing"; Isaiah 40:22: "He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth...")

The Bible states that our visible world is made of invisible components (Hebrews 11:3: "...what is seen was not made out of what was visible"). This truth recorded in the first century A.D. is verified by modern study of chemistry and physics (e.g., atomic and sub-atomic particles, light). 2 Peter 3:10 refers to the elements of the earth.

Modern biology uses a classification system that is consistent with the Biblical term "kinds"(Genesis 1:24). (Kinds are analogous to "families" in the Linnaeus classification system.)

The Bible explains the origin of the sun, moon, and stars, and establishes their use for light, time and seasons (Genesis 1: 14-18). Constellations are named, including the Bear, Orion, Pleiades, and the constellations of the south (Job 9:9 and 38:31; Amos 5:8). [Does anyone wonder what caused the earth's revolution around the sun to slow, resulting in changes to the 360-day year documented in the Bible, Hebrew calendar, and Mazzaroth, and utilized in our system of time and longitude/navigation? The answer to that question might be found in the Bible - if students are allowed to study it.]

The Bible tells us unborn children already have a name and a purpose (Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:4-5).

Botanist Dr. George Washington Carver was inspired by Genesis 1:29 to discover how plants could benefit mankind. He did pioneering work in the applied science of chemurgy (using chemicals from farm and forest products as raw materials in manufacturing) and developed hundreds of products from sweet potatoes and peanuts. ("... I give you every seed-bearing plant... and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food." Genesis 1:29)

The genealogies of the Old Testament can be used to calculate the approximate age of the earth.

The Bible is a source of information about foods that were eaten in ancient times. The Bible has many references to agricultural practices (farming and animal husbandry). Challenges to food production (drought, locusts) are also discussed.

The Bible refers to precious and semi-precious stones and metals used for construction, weapons, tools, and adornment.

U.S. HISTORY

The Bible was brought to our shores by the Pilgrims, our county's first settlers, and by countless immigrants thereafter. John Smith saved the Jamestown colony from starvation by applying the instruction stated in II-Thessalonians 3:10, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." The history of U.S. social institutions (economy, government, law, family, religion, education) is based on the application of concepts discussed in the Bible.

WORLD HISTORY and GEOGRAPHY

The Bible explains the origin of nations and languages (Genesis 11:1-9). The Bible records the rise and fall of ancient civilizations such as the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Greek empires.

Places are named in the Bible that still exist today, such as Egypt, the Euphrates River, Rome, Athens, and Jerusalem. Many places of antiquity that are mentioned in the Bible have been uncovered through archeology (Bethel, Ephesus). It is possible to trace the routes of travel mentioned (e.g., Paul's journeys).

The Bible helps students evaluate the characteristics of various leaders in world history (e.g., Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, Joshua, King David, King Solomon, King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1-4), and Darius the Mede (Daniel 6)).

Major events of the Bible such as regional famines and battles of war are verified by extra-Biblical sources.