

INTERIM STUDY PROPOSAL 2009-232

State of Arkansas
87th General Assembly
First Extraordinary Session, 2010

A Bill

SAG/Ins
SENATE BILL

By: Senator Altes

Filed with: Arkansas Legislative Council
pursuant to A.C.A. §10-3-217.

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO DIRECT THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO DEVELOP AND ADOPT CURRICULUM STANDARDS FOR AN ACADEMIC STUDY OF THE BIBLE COURSE THAT MAY BE OFFERED AS AN ELECTIVE COURSE IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT; TO SET REQUIREMENTS FOR TEACHING AN ACADEMIC STUDY OF THE BIBLE COURSE IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO DIRECT THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO DEVELOP AND ADOPT CURRICULUM STANDARDS FOR AN ACADEMIC STUDY OF THE BIBLE COURSE.

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

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 16, Subchapter 1 is amended to add an additional section to read as follows:

6-16-141. Academic study of the Bible course.

(a)(1) The State Board of Education shall develop and adopt curriculum standards for an elective academic study of the Bible course or courses that consist of a nonsectarian, nonreligious academic study of the Bible and its influence on literature, art, music, culture, and politics and may be offered to students in public school districts.

1 (2) The curriculum standards for an academic study of the Bible
2 course shall meet the:

3 (A) Academic rigor and standards of other elective courses
4 approved by the state board; and

5 (B) Requirements of the Arkansas Constitution and the
6 United States Constitution.

7 (b)(1) A public school district that elects to offer an academic study
8 of the Bible course shall implement the course in accordance with the
9 Arkansas Constitution and the United States Constitution, including the
10 manner in which the course is taught in the classroom and the assignment of
11 school district personnel teaching the course.

12 (2) Personnel assigned to teach the course shall be licensed to
13 teach in the State of Arkansas.

14 (3) Personnel shall not be assigned to teach the course based on
15 any:

16 (A) Religious test;

17 (B) Profession of faith or lack of faith;

18 (C) Prior or present religious affiliation or lack of
19 affiliation; or

20 (D) Criteria involving particular beliefs or lack of
21 beliefs about the Bible.

22 (c) An academic study of the Bible course offered by a public school
23 district shall:

24 (1) Be taught in an objective and nondevotional manner with no
25 attempt made to indoctrinate students as to either the truth or falsity of
26 the biblical materials or texts from other religious or cultural traditions;

27 (2) Not include teaching of religious doctrine or sectarian
28 interpretation of the Bible or of texts from other religious or cultural
29 traditions; and

30 (3) Not disparage or encourage a commitment to a set of
31 religious beliefs.

32 (d) The state board shall incorporate the requirements set forth in
33 this section into the criteria to be used to evaluate textbooks for an
34 academic study of the Bible course.

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36 Filed Date: 02/23/2010 By: SAG\lms