

State of Arkansas
88th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2011

A Bill

SAG/KFW
HOUSE BILL

By: Representative D. 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:

6-16-142. 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 and 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.

(2) The curriculum standards for an academic study of the Bible

1 course shall meet the:

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

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

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

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

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

15 (A) Religious test;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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35 Referral requested by: Representative Denny Altes

36 Prepared by: SAG/KFW