

1 State of Arkansas
2 89th General Assembly
3 First Extraordinary Session, 2013

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1273

4
5 By: Representative Harris

For An Act To Be Entitled

8 AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE VOLUNTARY STUDENT
9 EXPRESSION OF RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINTS IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL
10 DISTRICT; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

14 TO PROVIDE FOR THE VOLUNTARY STUDENT
15 EXPRESSION OF RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINTS IN A
16 PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT.

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

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

23 6-16-146. Voluntary student expression of religious viewpoints.

24 (a) A public school district shall not:

25 (1) Discriminate against a student or a parent of a student on
26 the basis of the student's religious viewpoint or religious expression; or

27 (2) Prohibit a student from expressing a religious viewpoint or
28 belief in the student's coursework, artwork, or other written or oral
29 assignments.

30 (b) A public school district shall:

31 (1) Allow a student to voluntarily express a religious viewpoint
32 in his or her coursework, artwork, and other written or oral assignments; and

33 (2) Evaluate the coursework, artwork, or assignment according to
34 ordinary academic standards, relevance to the assignment, and whether or not
35 the coursework, artwork, or assignment meets the requirements of the assigned
36 task.



1 (c) A student in a public school may:

2 (1) Voluntarily express a religious viewpoint in his or her
 3 coursework, artwork, or other written or oral assignments;

4 (2) Organize, attend, and participate in prayer groups,
 5 religious clubs, or religious gatherings under § 6-21-201 et seq.; and

6 (3) Wear clothing, accessories, or jewelry of an established and
 7 recognized religion and that complies with a school uniform policy, if
 8 applicable, under § 6-18-102.

9
 10 SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 6-21-205 is amended to read as follows:

11 6-21-205. Limited open forum.

12 (a) A public secondary school has a limited open forum whenever ~~such a~~
 13 school offers or grants an offering to or opportunity for one (1) or more
 14 noncurriculum-related student groups to meet on school premises during
 15 noninstructional time.

16 (b)(1) A school may deny sponsorship of a student group if the denial
 17 does not favor or disfavor a student group that meets for prayer or to
 18 express a religious viewpoint.

19 (2) The school shall provide a disclaimer of nonsponsorship of a
 20 student group for as long as confusion over the sponsorship of the student
 21 group may result.

22 (c) A school shall administer the school's limited open forum
 23 according to the Arkansas Constitution and the United States Constitution.