

1 State of Arkansas

2 92nd General Assembly

3 Regular Session, 2019

# A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1626

5 By: Representatives Cloud, Dotson

6 By: Senator B. Ballinger

## For An Act To Be Entitled

9 AN ACT CONCERNING THE OFFERING OF AN ACADEMIC STUDY  
10 OF THE BIBLE COURSE IF STUDENTS REQUEST THAT THE  
11 COURSE BE OFFERED; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

## Subtitle

15 CONCERNING THE OFFERING OF AN ACADEMIC  
16 STUDY OF THE BIBLE COURSE IF STUDENTS  
17 REQUEST THAT THE COURSE BE OFFERED.

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

22 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-16-145 is amended to read as follows:  
23 6-16-145. Academic study of the Bible course.

24 (a)(1) The State Board of Education shall allow for an elective  
25 academic study of the Bible course or courses that consist of a nonsectarian,  
26 nonreligious academic study of the Bible and its influence on literature,  
27 art, music, culture, and politics to be offered to students in public ~~school~~  
28 schools or school districts if the academic study of the Bible course meets  
29 the standards listed in this section.

30 (2) The curriculum standards submitted by a public school or  
31 school district for approval of an academic study of the Bible course shall  
32 meet the:

33 (A) Academic rigor and curriculum standards of other  
34 elective courses approved by the state board; and

35 (B) Requirements of the Arkansas Constitution and the  
36 United States Constitution.



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

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

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

10 (A) Religious test;

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

12 (C) Prior or present religious affiliation or lack of  
13 affiliation; or

14 (D) Criteria involving particular beliefs or lack of  
15 beliefs about the Bible.

16 (c) An academic study of the Bible course offered by a public school  
17 or school district shall:

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

21 (2) Not include teaching of religious doctrine or sectarian  
22 interpretation of the Bible or of texts from other religious or cultural  
23 traditions; and

24 (3) Not disparage or encourage a commitment to a set of  
25 religious beliefs.

26 (d) A public school or school district that elects to offer an  
27 academic study of the Bible course shall use only the standards in this  
28 section to:

29 (1) Evaluate textbooks for an academic study of the Bible  
30 course; and

31 (2) Teach an academic study of the Bible course.

32 (e) A public school or school district shall offer an academic study  
33 of the Bible course under this section if at least fifteen (15) students  
34 request that the public school or school district offer the academic study of  
35 the Bible course.