

1 AN ACT relating to religious texts literacy courses in the public schools.

2 ***Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:***

3 ➔Section 1. KRS 156.162 is amended to read as follows:

4 (1) Pursuant to KRS 156.160, the Kentucky Board of Education shall promulgate
5 administrative regulations to establish the courses of study for the different grades.

6 The administrative regulation that sets forth the required and elective courses for the
7 schools shall include ***an elective social studies course on the various religious***
8 ***texts of the many religions practiced in the Commonwealth***[-:

9 (a) ~~An elective social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures, Old Testament of~~
10 ~~the Bible;~~

11 (b) ~~An elective social studies course on the New Testament of the Bible; or~~

12 (c) ~~An elective social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures and the New~~
13 ~~Testament of the Bible].~~

14 (2) The purpose of a course under this section is to:

15 (a) Teach students knowledge of ***the religious texts' contents***[~~biblical content~~],
16 characters, poetry, and narratives that are prerequisites to understanding
17 contemporary society and culture, including literature, art, music, mores,
18 oratory, and public policy; and

19 (b) Familiarize students with, as applicable:

20 1. The contents of the ***religious texts***[~~Hebrew Scriptures or New~~
21 ~~Testament~~];

22 2. The ***histories***[~~history~~] of the ***religious texts***[~~Hebrew Scriptures or New~~
23 ~~Testament~~];

24 3. The literary style and structure of the ***religious texts***[~~Hebrew Scriptures~~
25 ~~or New Testament~~]; and

26 4. The influence of the ***religious texts***[~~Hebrew Scriptures or New~~
27 ~~Testament~~] on law, history, government, literature, art, music, customs,

1 morals, values, and culture.

2 (3) A student shall not be required to use a specific translation as the sole text of **a**
 3 **religious text**~~[the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament]~~ and may use as the basic
 4 textbook a different translation~~[of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament]~~ from
 5 that chosen by the school council.

6 (4) The Kentucky Department of Education shall include the course standards in the
 7 program of studies for Kentucky schools, including the teacher qualifications and
 8 required professional development.

9 (5) A course offered under this section shall follow applicable law and all federal and
 10 state guidelines in maintaining religious neutrality and accommodating the diverse
 11 religious views, traditions, and perspectives of students in the school. A course
 12 under this section shall not endorse, favor, or promote, or disfavor or show hostility
 13 toward, any particular religion or nonreligious faith or religious perspective. The
 14 Kentucky Board of Education, in complying with this section, shall not violate any
 15 provision of the United States Constitution or federal law, the Kentucky
 16 Constitution or any state law, or any administrative regulations of the United States
 17 Department of Education or the Kentucky Department of Education.

18 ➔Section 2. KRS 158.197 is amended to read as follows:

19 (1) A school-based decision making council under administrative regulations of the
 20 Kentucky Board of Education may offer students in grade nine (9) or above **an**
 21 **elective social studies course on the religions practiced in the Commonwealth**~~[-~~

22 ~~(a) An elective social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures, Old Testament of~~
 23 ~~the Bible;~~

24 ~~(b) An elective social studies course on the New Testament of the Bible; or~~

25 ~~(c) An elective social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures and the New~~
 26 ~~Testament of the Bible].~~

27 (2) The purpose of a course under this section is to:

- 1 (a) Teach students knowledge of *the religious texts' contents*~~[biblical content]~~,
2 characters, poetry, and narratives that are prerequisites to understanding
3 contemporary society and culture, including literature, art, music, mores,
4 oratory, and public policy; and
- 5 (b) Familiarize students with, as applicable:
- 6 1. The contents of the *religious texts*~~[Hebrew Scriptures or New~~
7 ~~Testament]~~;
 - 8 2. The *histories*~~[history]~~ of the *religious texts*~~[Hebrew Scriptures or New~~
9 ~~Testament]~~;
 - 10 3. The literary *styles*~~[style]~~ and *structures*~~[structure]~~ of the *religious*
11 *texts*~~[Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament]~~; and
 - 12 4. The influence of the *religious texts*~~[Hebrew Scriptures or New~~
13 ~~Testament]~~ on law, history, government, literature, art, music, customs,
14 morals, values, and culture.
- 15 (3) A student shall not be required to use a specific translation as the sole text of *a*
16 *religious text*~~[the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament]~~ and may use as the basic
17 textbook a different translation~~[of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament]~~ from
18 that chosen by the school council.
- 19 (4) A course offered under this section shall follow applicable law and all federal and
20 state guidelines in maintaining religious neutrality and accommodating the diverse
21 religious views, traditions, and perspectives of students in the school. A course
22 under this section shall not endorse, favor, or promote, or disfavor or show hostility
23 toward, any particular religion or nonreligious faith or religious perspective. A
24 school-based decision making council, in complying with this section, shall not
25 violate any provision of the United States Constitution or federal law, the Kentucky
26 Constitution or any state law, or any administrative regulations of the United States
27 Department of Education or the Kentucky Department of Education.

- 1 (5) Any school council organized pursuant to KRS 160.345 or, if none exists, the
2 principal, may authorize the display of historic artifacts, monuments, symbols, and
3 texts, including but not limited to religious materials, in conjunction with a course
4 of study that includes an elective course in history, civilization, ethics, comparative
5 religion, literature, or other subject area that uses such artifacts, monuments,
6 symbols, and texts as instructional material if the display is:
- 7 (a) Appropriate to the overall educational purpose of the course; and
 - 8 (b) Consistent with the requirements of KRS 42.705.