

1 AN ACT relating to the display of the Ten Commandments in schools.

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

3 ➔SECTION 1. KRS 158.178 IS REPEALED AND REENACTED TO READ

4 AS FOLLOWS:

5 (1) The General Assembly finds that:

6 (a) In 2005, the Supreme Court of the United States recognized that it is
7 permissible to display the Ten Commandments on government property in
8 Van Orden v. Perry, 545 U.S. 677 (2005);

9 (b) In 2019, the Supreme Court of the United States further recognized that the
10 Ten Commandments "have historical significance as one of the foundations
11 of our legal system...." in American Legion v. American Humanist
12 Association, 588 U.S. 29 (2019), and also ruled that the display of the Ten
13 Commandments on public property may have "multiple purposes" such as
14 "historical significance" and to represent a "common cultural heritage";

15 (c) Recognizing the historical role of the Ten Commandments accords with our
16 nation's history and faithfully reflects the understanding of the founders of
17 our nation with respect to the necessity of civic morality to a functional self-
18 government;

19 (d) Including the Ten Commandments in the education of our children is part
20 of our state and national history, culture, and tradition;

21 (e) The text of the Ten Commandments set forth in this section is identical to
22 the text of the Ten Commandments monument that was upheld by the
23 Supreme Court of the United States in Van Orden v. Perry, 545 U.S. 677
24 (2005);

25 (f) The Mayflower Compact of 1620 was America's first written constitution
26 and made a Covenant with Almighty God to "form a civil body politic."
27 This was the first purely American document of self-governance and

1 *affirmed the link between civil society and God;*

2 *(g) The decision set forth by the Supreme Court of the United States in Van*
3 *Orden v. Perry, 545 U.S. 677 (2005) ensures that the students in our public*
4 *schools may understand and appreciate the foundational documents of our*
5 *state and national government;*

6 *(h) The Supreme Court of the United States acknowledged that the Ten*
7 *Commandments may be displayed on local government property when a*
8 *private donation is made for the purchase of the historical monument in*
9 *Pleasant Grove City, Utah v. Summum, 555 U.S. 460 (2009); and*

10 *(i) It is the intent of the General Assembly that this section shall not create an*
11 *unfunded mandate, and local boards of education are encouraged to use*
12 *documents that are printed and made available to the schools free of*
13 *charge.*

14 *(2) No later than January 1, 2027, a public school or public charter school shall*
15 *conspicuously display the Ten Commandments in each classroom. The nature of*
16 *the display shall be determined by each school with a minimum requirement that*
17 *the text of the Ten Commandments:*

18 *(a) Be displayed on a poster or framed document that is at least sixteen (16)*
19 *inches by twenty (20) inches;*

20 *(b) Be the central focus of the poster or framed document and shall be printed*
21 *in a large, easily readable font;*

22 *(c) Read as follows:*

23 *"The Ten Commandments*

24 *I AM the LORD thy God.*

25 *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

26 *Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven images.*

27 *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.*

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his cattle, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."; and

(d) Contain a context statement, as follows:

"The History of the Ten Commandments in American Public Education

The Ten Commandments were a prominent part of American public education for almost three centuries. Around the year 1688, The New England Primer became the first published American textbook and was the equivalent of a first grade reader. The New England Primer was used in public schools throughout the United States for more than one hundred fifty years to teach Americans to read and contained more than forty questions about the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were also included in public school textbooks published by educator William McGuffey, a noted university president and professor. A version of his famous McGuffey Readers was written in the early 1800s and became one of the most popular textbooks in the history of American education, selling more than one hundred million copies. Copies of the McGuffey Readers are still available today. The Ten Commandments also appeared in textbooks published by Noah Webster which were widely used in American public schools along with America's first comprehensive dictionary that Webster also published. His textbook, The American Spelling Book, contained the Ten Commandments and sold more than one hundred million copies for use by public school children all across the

1 *nation and was still available for use in American public schools in the year 1975."*

2 *(3) A public school or public charter school shall not use public funds to purchase*
3 *the displays required by this section. A public school or public charter school*
4 *shall only accept donated displays that meet the requirements of this section.*

5 *(4) The Kentucky Department of Education shall:*

6 *(a) Adopt administrative regulations in accordance with KRS Chapter 13A to*
7 *ensure the proper enforcement of this section; and*

8 *(b) Identify appropriate resources to comply with this section that are free of*
9 *charge. Once identified, the department shall list the free resources on the*
10 *department's website.*

11 ➔ SECTION 2. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 164 IS CREATED TO
12 READ AS FOLLOWS:

13 *(1) No later than January 1, 2027, a public postsecondary education institution shall*
14 *conspicuously display the Ten Commandments in each classroom of the*
15 *institution.*

16 *(2) The text of the Ten Commandments shall follow the same minimum requirements*
17 *as public schools and public charter schools as established in subsection (2) of*
18 *Section 1 of this Act.*

19 *(3) A public postsecondary education institution shall not use public funds to*
20 *purchase the displays required by this section and shall only accept donated*
21 *displays that meet the requirements of this section.*

22 *(4) The Council on Postsecondary Education shall:*

23 *(a) Adopt administrative regulations in accordance with KRS Chapter 13A to*
24 *ensure the proper enforcement of this section; and*

25 *(b) Identify appropriate resources to comply with this section that are free of*
26 *charge. Once identified, the department shall list the free resources on the*
27 *council's website.*

1 ➔Section 3. KRS 158.195 is amended to read as follows:

2 (1) (a) Local boards shall require each public elementary and secondary school to
3 display the national motto of the United States, "In God We Trust," in a
4 prominent location in the school.

5 (b) The display required in paragraph (a) of this subsection may take the form of
6 but is not limited to a mounted plaque or student artwork.

7 (2) As used in this section, "prominent location" means a school entryway, cafeteria, or
8 common area where students are likely to see an item on display.

9 (3) Local boards may allow any teacher or administrator in a public school district of
10 the Commonwealth to read or post in a public school building, classroom, or event
11 any excerpts or portions of **any or all of the following historically significant**
12 **documents**: the national motto; the national anthem; the pledge of allegiance; the
13 preamble to the Kentucky Constitution; the Declaration of Independence; the
14 Mayflower Compact; **the Ten Commandments, in addition to the display required**
15 **by Section 1 of this Act**; the writings, speeches, documents, and proclamations of
16 the founding fathers and presidents of the United States; United States Supreme
17 Court decisions; and acts of the United States Congress including the published text
18 of the Congressional Record. There shall be no content-based censorship of
19 American history or heritage in the Commonwealth based on religious references in
20 these writings, documents, and records.

21 (4) Beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, local boards shall require each public
22 school building that contains instructional space for students in grades six (6)
23 through twelve (12) to conspicuously display in a prominent location, in both
24 English and Spanish, a printed abstract of KRS 339.210 to 339.450, a list of the
25 limited or prohibited occupations for minors, and a notice stating the working hours
26 per day for each day of the week permissible for minors to work. The same
27 information or display shall also be posted on a district's or school's website.