

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, For nearly 2,000 years, the Bible has been a
2 cornerstone in the development of Western civilization, permeating
3 nearly all aspects of our culture, manifesting itself most notably
4 in our literature, music, art, drama, and philosophy; and

5 WHEREAS, Biblical references abound in the works of Western
6 literature, including those of William Shakespeare and John Milton,
7 and allusions to biblical themes and characters have been used
8 effectively by writers as diverse as Dante Alighieri and William
9 Faulkner; and

10 WHEREAS, Because the Bible was, for a long time, part of a
11 common heritage shared by our forebears, great leaders of the past,
12 including George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther
13 King, Jr., could inspire entire generations by sprinkling their
14 speeches liberally with biblical references; and

15 WHEREAS, Indeed, the English language itself is so filled
16 with biblical vocabulary, themes, and terms that it cannot be fully
17 understood and appreciated by individuals unfamiliar with the
18 Bible, depriving them of much of the richness of the language; and

19 WHEREAS, A recent report on Bible literacy, which included
20 findings from a Gallup Poll survey on American teenagers' knowledge
21 of the Bible, found that American high school students are
22 deficient in their academic knowledge of the Bible and that this
23 deficiency is limiting their ability to study literature and to
24 understand art, music, history, and culture; and

1 WHEREAS, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark, in the 1963
2 case *Abington v. Shempp*, wrote, "[~~it~~] might well be said that one's
3 education is not complete without a study of comparative religion
4 or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement
5 of civilization [~~and~~] that the Bible is worthy of study for its
6 literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here
7 indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when
8 presented objectively as part of a secular program of education,
9 may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment"; and

10 WHEREAS, In 1999, in a document entitled *The Bible & Public*
11 *Schools: a First Amendment Guide*, 20 widely diverse groups,
12 including the American Federation of Teachers, the National
13 Education Association, the National Association of School Boards,
14 as well as major Christian, Jewish, and Muslim organizations,
15 agreed that the Bible can and should be taught in public schools;
16 and

17 WHEREAS, Furthermore, Gallup Polls over the years have
18 consistently shown that more than two-thirds of the American public
19 believe the Bible should be taught in public schools as part of the
20 literature and social studies curricula; and

21 WHEREAS, Section 28.002(f), Education Code, allows a school
22 district to offer courses for local credit in addition to those in
23 the required curriculum, and, according to the National Council on
24 Bible Curriculum in Public Schools, 49 school districts already
25 offer elective Bible classes in their curricula; Section 28.002(f)
26 also requires the State Board of Education to be flexible in
27 approving a course for credit toward the state's high school

1 graduation requirements; now, therefore, be it

2 RESOLVED, That the 79th Legislature of the State of Texas
3 hereby direct the Texas Education Agency and the State Board of
4 Education to facilitate individual school districts' offerings of
5 elective courses on academic studies of the Bible in their high
6 school curriculum; and, be it further

7 RESOLVED, That the secretary of state forward official copies
8 of this resolution to the commissioner of education and to the chair
9 of the State Board of Education.