

By: Janek

S.R. No. 880

R E S O L U T I O N

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. Schempp*, 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, and the National Association of School  
14 Boards, as well as major Christian, Jewish, and Muslim  
15 organizations, agreed that the Bible can and should be taught in  
16 public schools; 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 Senate of the 79th Texas Legislature  
3 hereby declare its intent that the State of Texas lead the nation in  
4 understanding what students need to know about the Bible, in  
5 building that knowledge into standards and curricula, in testing  
6 for that knowledge, and in working with publishers to develop  
7 appropriate curricula and textbooks; and, be it further

8         RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education be directed to  
9 incorporate these goals in its long-range planning and that the  
10 board and the Texas Education Agency be directed to (1) develop  
11 standards for Biblical knowledge at appropriate grade levels so  
12 that students can fully understand Western and American  
13 civilization, including its history, music, art, literature,  
14 culture, legal system, form of government, major events, and the  
15 English language itself; and (2) build these standards into the  
16 required curriculum as essential knowledge and skills; and, be it  
17 further

18         RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education be directed to  
19 add to the list of approved courses for credit toward graduation  
20 requirements an elective course on the Bible and its influence on  
21 America, consistent with academic study as interpreted by the U.S.  
22 Supreme Court and the national consensus evident in *The Bible &*  
23 *Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*; and, be it further

24         RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education be directed to  
25 work with textbook publishers toward the development and subsequent  
26 selection of appropriate textbooks and supplemental materials;  
27 and, be it further

1           RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education and the Texas  
2 Education Agency be directed to develop specific and detailed  
3 recommendations for implementation of this resolution, including  
4 an aggressive but realistic implementation schedule, and that they  
5 be further directed to work with the Texas Legislature to determine  
6 whether specific legislation may be required to achieve the goals  
7 of this resolution; and, be it further

8           RESOLVED, That an intent of this resolution be to encourage  
9 districts, teachers, school staff, the media, and other interested  
10 parties to build an understanding and consensus as to the  
11 importance of teaching about the Bible in the public schools of this  
12 state; and, be it further

13           RESOLVED, That the secretary of the Texas Senate forward  
14 official copies of this resolution to the commissioner of education  
15 and to the chair of the State Board of Education.