

By: Chisum, Flynn, Zerwas, Berman, Eissler,  
et al.

H.B. No. 1287

Substitute the following for H.B. No. 1287:

By: Mowery

C.S.H.B. No. 1287

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to public school elective courses providing academic study  
of the Bible.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 28, Education Code, is  
amended by adding Section 28.011 to read as follows:

Sec. 28.011. ELECTIVE COURSES ON THE BIBLE'S HEBREW  
SCRIPTURES (OLD TESTAMENT) AND NEW TESTAMENT AND THEIR IMPACT ON  
THE HISTORY AND LITERATURE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION. (a) A school  
district may offer to students in grade nine or above:

(1) an elective course on the Hebrew Scriptures (Old  
Testament) and its impact and an elective course on the New  
Testament and its impact; or

(2) an elective course that combines the courses  
described by Subdivision (1).

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

(1) teach students knowledge of biblical content,  
characters, poetry, and narratives that are prerequisites to  
understanding contemporary society and culture, including  
literature, art, music, mores, oratory, and public policy; and

(2) familiarize students with, as applicable:

(A) the contents of the Hebrew Scriptures or New  
Testament;

(B) the history of the Hebrew Scriptures or New

1 Testament;

2 (C) the literary style and structure of the  
3 Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament; and

4 (D) the influence of the Hebrew Scriptures or New  
5 Testament on law, history, government, literature, art, music,  
6 customs, morals, values, and culture.

7 (c) A student may not be required to use a specific  
8 translation as the sole text of the Hebrew Scriptures or New  
9 Testament and may use as the basic textbook a different translation  
10 of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament from that chosen by the  
11 board of trustees of the student's school district or the student's  
12 teacher.

13 (d) A course offered under this section shall follow  
14 applicable law and all federal and state guidelines in maintaining  
15 religious neutrality and accommodating the diverse religious  
16 views, traditions, and perspectives of students in their school  
17 district. A course under this section shall not endorse, favor, or  
18 promote, or disfavor or show hostility toward, any particular  
19 religion or nonreligious faith or religious perspective. Nothing in  
20 this statute is intended to violate any provision of the United  
21 States Constitution or federal law, the Texas Constitution or any  
22 state law, or any rules or guidelines provided by the United States  
23 Department of Education or the Texas Education Agency.

24 (e) A teacher of a course offered under this section must  
25 hold a minimum of a High School Composite Certification in language  
26 arts, social studies, or history with, where practical, a minor in  
27 religion or biblical studies. A teacher selected to teach a course

1 under this section shall successfully complete staff development  
2 training outlined in Section 21.459. A course under this section  
3 may only be taught by a teacher who has successfully completed  
4 training under Section 21.459.

5 (f) For the purpose of a student earning credit for high  
6 school graduation, a school district shall grant one-half academic  
7 elective credit for satisfactory completion of a course on the  
8 Hebrew Scriptures, one-half academic elective credit for  
9 satisfactory completion of a course on the New Testament, and  
10 one-half academic elective credit for satisfactory completion of a  
11 combined course on both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New  
12 Testament. This subsection applies only to a course that is taught  
13 in strict compliance with this section.

14 (g) If, for a particular semester, fewer than 15 students at  
15 a school district campus register to enroll in a course required by  
16 this section, the district is not required to offer the course at  
17 that campus for that semester.

18 (h) This section does not prohibit the board of trustees of  
19 a school district from offering an elective course based on the  
20 books of a religion other than Christianity. In determining whether  
21 to offer such a course, the board may consider various factors,  
22 including student and parent demand for such a course and the impact  
23 such books have had on history and culture.

24 SECTION 2. Subchapter J, Chapter 21, Education Code, is  
25 amended by adding Section 21.459 to read as follows:

26 Sec. 21.459. BIBLE COURSE TRAINING. (a) The commissioner  
27 shall develop and make available training materials and other

1 teacher training resources for a school district to use in  
2 assisting teachers of elective Bible courses in developing:

3 (1) expertise in the appropriate Bible course  
4 curriculum;

5 (2) understanding of applicable supreme court rulings  
6 and current constitutional law regarding how Bible courses are to  
7 be taught in public schools objectively as a part of a secular  
8 program of education;

9 (3) understanding of how to present the Bible in an  
10 objective, academic manner that neither promotes nor disparages  
11 religion, nor is taught from a particular sectarian point of view;

12 (4) proficiency in instructional approaches that  
13 present course material in a manner that respects all faiths and  
14 religious traditions, while favoring none; and

15 (5) expertise in how to avoid devotional content or  
16 proselytizing in the classroom.

17 (b) The commissioner shall develop materials and resources  
18 under this section in consultation with appropriate faculty members  
19 at institutions of higher education.

20 (c) The commissioner shall make the training materials and  
21 other teacher training resources required under Subsection (a)  
22 available to Bible course teachers through access to in-service  
23 training.

24 (d) The commissioner shall use funds appropriated for the  
25 purpose to administer this section.

26 SECTION 3. Section 28.002(a), Education Code, is amended to  
27 read as follows:

1 (a) Each school district that offers kindergarten through  
2 grade 12 shall offer, as a required curriculum:

3 (1) a foundation curriculum that includes:

4 (A) English language arts;

5 (B) mathematics;

6 (C) science; and

7 (D) social studies, consisting of Texas, United  
8 States, and world history, government, and geography; and

9 (2) an enrichment curriculum that includes:

10 (A) to the extent possible, languages other than  
11 English;

12 (B) health, with emphasis on the importance of  
13 proper nutrition and exercise;

14 (C) physical education;

15 (D) fine arts;

16 (E) economics, with emphasis on the free  
17 enterprise system and its benefits;

18 (F) career and technology education; ~~and~~

19 (G) technology applications; and

20 (H) religious literature, including the Hebrew  
21 Scriptures (Old Testament) and New Testament, and its impact on  
22 history and literature.

23 SECTION 4. The provisions of this Act pertaining to a school  
24 district do not take effect until the 2009-2010 school year.

25 SECTION 5. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
26 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
27 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this

C.S.H.B. No. 1287

- 1 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
- 2 Act takes effect September 1, 2007.