

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

S.B. 965  
By: Parker  
State Affairs  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

On June 27, 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 6-3 in *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, finding in favor of Joseph Kennedy, a high school football coach, who sued Bremerton School District in Washington State because his contract was not renewed in response to Kennedy praying on the field immediately following games. Grounded in this supreme court case decision, S.B. 965 codifies the right of school employees to engage in religious speech or prayer while on duty. As established in *Kennedy*, the bill excludes any infringement that is necessary to further a compelling state interest and narrowly tailored using the least restrictive means to achieve that compelling state interest.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

S.B. 965 amends the Education Code to prohibit a public school district or open-enrollment charter school or another state governmental entity from infringing on the right of a district or school employee to engage in religious speech or prayer while on duty, unless the infringement is necessary to further a compelling state interest and narrowly tailored using the least restrictive means to achieve that compelling state interest.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2025.