

House Concurrent Resolution No. 22

91ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

4588L.011

Relating to memorializing the Congress of the United States to pass a constitutional amendment to the Constitution of the United States to allow for voluntary school prayer and the protection of public religious speech.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI, AS FOLLOWS:

Whereas, our Country was founded on the precepts of freedom, liberty, diversity, and the right of people to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience; and

Whereas, from the very beginning of our nation to the founding of our first national government in 1774, and from the Continental Congress to the Constitutional Convention and the years after the establishment of our Constitution, voluntary prayer has been a unifying and consoling force; and

Whereas, statements of belief in a Supreme Power and the virtue of seeking guidance, strength, and protection from that power are prevalent throughout our national history and appear in our national documents as well as in virtually every state constitution; and

Whereas, the framers of the Constitution, recognizing free exercise of religion as an inalienable right, secured its protection with the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States; and

Whereas, every session of Congress, and of many other legislative and public bodies across the nation, begins with the comfort and encouragement of voluntary prayer; and

20 **Whereas**, our government has a constitutional obligation to protect religious
21 freedom; and
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23 **Whereas**, one of the purposes of education is to prepare students to be good
24 citizens; and
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26 **Whereas**, instilling an appreciation and respect not only for the beliefs and
27 traditions of others but also for the longstanding beliefs and traditions of the nation forms a part
28 of good citizenship; and
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30 **Whereas**, voluntary student prayer formed a part of American public schools from
31 their origination in 1642 for over three hundred years afterward until the United States Supreme
32 Court in a 1962 ruling it said was "without precedent", struck down what it described as
33 "voluntary, nondenominational school prayer"; and
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35 **Whereas**, in 1985 the Supreme Court even struck down voluntary, silent student
36 prayers; and
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38 **Whereas**, an increasing number of recent religion-hostile court decisions now
39 prohibit the overwhelming majority of Americans from participating in the very same religious
40 expressions their parents, grandparents, and generations before them enjoyed; and
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42 **Whereas**, an increasing and ever-widening hostility against voluntary prayer and
43 public religious speech has produced a public atmosphere of fear, intimidation, and confusion
44 about school prayer and religious speech; and
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46 **Whereas**, an overwhelming majority of Americans now favor giving specific
47 protections to these traditional religious expressions; and
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49 **Whereas**, House Joint Resolution No. 81 has been offered in the United States
50 House of Representatives proposing a constitutional amendment for ratification by the people:
51 "To secure the people's right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience:
52 'Neither the United States nor any State shall establish any official religion, but the
53 people's right to pray and to recognize their religious beliefs, heritage, and traditions on public
54 property, including schools, shall not be infringed.

55 "The United States and the States shall not compose school prayers, nor require any
56 person to join in prayer or other religious activity."
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58 **Now, therefore, be it resolved** that the members of the Missouri House
59 of Representatives, Ninety-first General Assembly, Second Regular Session, the Senate
60 concurring therein, urges the United States Congress to pass House Joint Resolution No. 81
61 proposing a "School Prayer Amendment" to the Constitution for a ratification by the people and
62 reinstating protection for voluntary school prayer and other public religious speech; and
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64 **Be it further resolved** that the Chief Clerk of the Missouri House of
65 Representatives be instructed to prepare a properly inscribed copy of this resolution for the
66 Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the President of the United States Senate,
67 and each member of the Missouri Congressional Delegation in order that they may be apprised
68 of the sense of this matter; and
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70 **Be it further resolved** that this resolution be sent to the Governor for his
71 approval or rejection pursuant to the Missouri Constitution.