

HCS HB 696 -- TRADITIONAL CELEBRATIONS SCHOOL

SPONSOR: Kelly (141)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on General Laws by a vote of 8 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 10 to 3.

This bill states it will allow school districts to educate students about the history of traditional winter and spring celebrations and allow students and district staff to offer traditional greetings regarding the celebrations.

A school district may display on school property scenes and symbols associated with traditional winter and spring celebrations, including a menorah or a Christmas image such as a nativity scene or Christmas tree, if the display includes a scene or symbol of more than one religion or one religion and at least one secular scene or symbol.

Any scene or symbol relating to a traditional winter or spring celebration must be displayed in a manner so as not to violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that this bill allows schools to put up religious displays at seasonal celebrations and to use religious seasonal greetings. Supporters stress that this bill doesn't promote one religion over another, it just recognizes the role of faith in students' lives. This bill is not intended to change the law but to give schools and teachers clear guidelines as to what is allowed.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Kelly; Pamela Cooper; Michelle Cooper; Concerned Women for America of Missouri; Lila Jenkins; and Missouri Family Network.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.