

House Concurrent Resolution No. 13

100TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE TRENT.

0321H.011

DANA RADEMAN MILLER, Chief Clerk

1 **WHEREAS**, for nearly two thousand years, the Bible has been a cornerstone of Western
2 civilization, its content permeating nearly all aspects of culture, manifesting itself most notably
3 in literature, music, art, drama, public discourse, and philosophy; and
4

5 **WHEREAS**, wisdom literature from the Bible, which has an emphasis on good
6 character, has been taught for three thousand years but not for the last fifty years by accident; and
7

8 **WHEREAS**, forty studies have documented a correlation between improved school
9 grades for children and the teaching of the biblical character of love, integrity, compassion, and
10 self-discipline; and
11

12 **WHEREAS**, biblical references abound in the works of Western literature, including
13 those of William Shakespeare and John Milton, and allusions to biblical themes and characters
14 have been used effectively by writers as diverse as Dante Alighieri and Toni Morrison; and
15

16 **WHEREAS**, the Bible has been a source for public discourse and policy both past and
17 present, and great leaders, including George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther
18 King, Jr., inspired entire generations by including biblical references and language in their
19 speeches; and
20

21 **WHEREAS**, the English language itself is so filled with biblical vocabulary, themes,
22 terms, and allusions that it cannot be fully understood and appreciated by individuals unfamiliar
23 with the Bible, depriving them of much of the richness of the language; and
24

25 **WHEREAS**, a report on Bible literacy, which included findings from a Gallup Poll
26 survey on American teenagers' knowledge of the Bible, found that American high school
27 students are deficient in their academic knowledge of the Bible and that this deficiency is a
28 limiting factor in their ability to study literature and to understand art, music, history, and culture;
29 and

30 **WHEREAS**, a national study of high school English teachers found that ninety-six
31 percent believe that students are disadvantaged when reading English literature if they are not
32 familiar with the Bible; and

33

34 **WHEREAS**, United States Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark, in the 1963 case *Abington*
35 *v. Schempp*, wrote that "it might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study
36 of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of
37 civilization." He further wrote "that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic
38 qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when
39 presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently
40 with the First Amendment"; and

41

42 **WHEREAS**, in a document entitled *The Bible & Public Schools, a First Amendment*
43 *Guide*, twenty diverse groups, including the National School Boards Association, American
44 Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, Christian groups, Jewish groups, and
45 secular groups, all agreed that the Bible can and should be taught in public schools as long as
46 such teaching is academic and not devotional in nature, demonstrates an awareness of the
47 religious nature of the Bible but does not press students to accept religion, does not engage in
48 the practice of religion, neither encourages or discourages differing religious views, and does not
49 ask students to conform to any religious belief; and

50

51 **WHEREAS**, George Gallup polling and other research over the years has shown that
52 more than two-thirds of the American public believe the Bible should be taught in public schools
53 as part of the curriculum in literature courses, social studies courses, or both literature and social
54 studies courses; and

55

56 **WHEREAS**, the general assembly realizes the academic advantage to students of a basic
57 familiarity with the Bible:

58

59 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the members of the House of
60 Representatives of the One Hundredth General Assembly, First Regular Session, the Senate
61 concurring therein, hereby:

62 (1) Encourage public high schools in Missouri to:

63 (a) Offer to students in grade nine or above:

64 a. An elective course on the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and their influence and
65 an elective course on the New Testament and its influence; or

- 66 b. An elective course that combines the courses described above; and
67 (b) Require that all world literature courses include a three-week session on wisdom
68 literature from the Bible, as has been done for three thousand years;
69 (2) Declare that the purpose of the courses described above is to teach students the
70 biblical content, characters, and narratives of the Bible that are prerequisites to understanding
71 contemporary society and culture, along with the role the Bible has played in the development
72 of literature, art, music, culture, and public discourse;
73 (3) Urge the offering of the courses described above only if the courses:
74 (a) Do not endorse, favor, or promote, or disfavor or discourage, any particular religion
75 or nonreligious faith or religious perspective;
76 (b) Are taught by state-certified literature or social studies teachers who have been
77 selected without inquiry into their religious beliefs or lack thereof;
78 (c) Allow students to choose their preferred translation of the Hebrew Scriptures or the
79 New Testament; and
80 (d) Award students the same number of course credits that are awarded for other courses
81 of similar duration;
82 (4) Urge the offering of the courses described above only if school districts make teacher
83 training available to teachers of the courses so that they are made aware of the best practices
84 involved in teaching the Bible in a public school setting; and
85 (5) Declare that no state entity, school district, or local educational agency should
86 prevent the teaching of courses or classes on the Bible so long as those courses meet guidelines
87 consistent with the First Amendment; and
88
89 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Chief Clerk of the Missouri House of
90 Representatives be instructed to prepare a properly inscribed copy of this resolution for each
91 school district in Missouri.

✓