

1 HB616  
2 201260-1  
3 By Representatives Ingram, Wingo, Mooney, Stadthagen, Wheeler,  
4 Farley, South, Weaver, Wood (R), Treadaway, McCutcheon, Shedd,  
5 Crawford, Ledbetter, Lovvorn, Blackshear, Sorrells, Allen,  
6 Dismukes, Marques, Isbell and Boyd  
7 RFD: Education Policy  
8 First Read: 14-MAY-19

8 SYNOPSIS: This bill would allow public schools to  
9 offer elective courses focusing on the study of the  
10 Bible in grades six to 12, would provide for review  
11 to ensure that the courses do not violate the First  
12 Amendment, and would provide immunity for teachers  
13 who teach the material in good faith and with  
14 proper historical context.

15 This bill would also require the State Board  
16 of Education to adopt rules and policies to  
17 implement the requirements of the bill.

19 A BILL  
20 TO BE ENTITLED  
21 AN ACT

22  
23 Relating to education; to allow public schools to  
24 offer elective courses focusing on the study of the Bible in  
25 grades six to 12; to require that the courses do not violate  
26 the First Amendment to the United States Constitution; to  
27 provide immunity for teachers who teach the material in good

1 faith and with proper historical context; and to require the  
2 State Board of Education to adopt rules and policies to  
3 implement the requirements of the bill.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

5 Section 1. (a) A public school may offer elective  
6 courses in the study of the Bible in grades six to 12,  
7 inclusive, as follows:

8 (1) A social studies course on the Old Testament of  
9 the Bible.

10 (2) A social studies course on the New Testament of  
11 the Bible.

12 (3) A social studies course on the Old Testament and  
13 the New Testament of the Bible.

14 (b) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules  
15 and policies necessary for implementing the requirements of  
16 this act.

17 (c) Before a public school offers an elective course  
18 in the study of the Bible under this act, a legal review of  
19 the course material shall be conducted to ensure that the  
20 course material does not violate the First Amendment to the  
21 United States Constitution.

22 Section 2. (a) Elective courses offered pursuant to  
23 this act shall be designed to do all of the following:

24 (1) Teach students about Bible characters, poetry,  
25 and narratives that are useful for understanding contemporary  
26 society and culture, including art, music, social mores,  
27 oration, and public policy.

1 (2) Familiarize students with the following:

2 a. The contents of the Bible.

3 b. The history of the Bible.

4 c. The literary style and structure of the Bible.

5 d. The influence of the Bible on law, history,  
6 government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values,  
7 and cultures.

8 (b) A student may not be required to use a specific  
9 translation of the Bible and may use as the basic textbook a  
10 different translation of the Bible from the one chosen by the  
11 State Board of Education.

12 (c) A teacher of a course offered pursuant to this  
13 act shall comply with applicable law and all federal and state  
14 guidelines regarding maintaining religious neutrality and  
15 accommodating the diverse religious views, traditions, and  
16 perspectives of students in the school.

17 (d) A teacher of a course offered pursuant to this  
18 act may not endorse, favor, promote, disfavor, or show  
19 hostility toward any particular religion or nonreligious faith  
20 or religious perspective.

21 (e) A teacher of a course offered pursuant to this  
22 act shall be immune from civil liability and disciplinary  
23 action for the contents of the course if the instruction is  
24 given with proper historical context and in good faith.

25 (f) The State Board of Education, in complying with  
26 this section, shall not violate the United States  
27 Constitution, federal law, the Constitution of Alabama of

1 1901, state law, or any administrative rule or regulation of  
2 the United States Department of Education or the State Board  
3 of Education.

4 Section 3. This act shall become effective on the  
5 first day of the third month following its passage and  
6 approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.