

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2017 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 2551

**FISCAL
NOTE**

BY DELEGATES RODIGHIERO, THOMPSON, ELDRIDGE,

HICKS AND LYNCH

[Introduced February 20, 2017; Referred
to the Committee on Education then the Judiciary.]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new article,
 2 designated §18-28A-1 and §18-28A-2, all relating to requiring the West Virginia
 3 Department of Education to create a Bible literacy course in public schools.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

1 That the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, be amended by adding thereto a new
 2 article, designated §18-28A-1 and §18-28A-2, all to read as follows:

ARTICLE 28A. BIBLE LITERACY PROGRAM.

§18-28A-1. Authorization; curriculum; requirements; purpose.

1 (a) The West Virginia Board of Education shall promulgate administrative regulations to
 2 establish the courses of study for the different grades. The administrative regulation that sets forth
 3 the required and elective courses for the schools shall include:

- 4 (1) An elective Literature/Language Arts course on the Hebrew Scriptures, Old Testament
- 5 of the Bible;
- 6 (2) An elective Literature/Language Arts course on the New Testament of the Bible; or
- 7 (3) An elective Literature/Language Arts course on the Hebrew Scriptures and the New
- 8 Testament of the Bible.

9 (b) The purpose of a course under this section is to:

- 10 (1) Teach students knowledge of biblical content, characters, poetry and narratives that
- 11 are prerequisites to understanding contemporary society and culture, including literature, art,
- 12 music, mores, oratory and public policy; and
- 13 (2) Familiarize students with, as applicable:
 - 14 (A) The contents of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;
 - 15 (B) The history of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;
 - 16 (C) The literary style and structure of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament; and
 - 17 (D) The influence of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament on law, history,
 - 18 government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values and culture.

19 (c) A student shall not be required to use a specific translation as the sole text of the
20 Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament and may use as the basic textbook a different translation
21 of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament from that chosen by the school council.

22 (d) The West Virginia Department of Education shall include the course standards in the
23 program of studies for West Virginia schools including the teacher qualifications and required
24 professional development.

25 (e) A course offered under this section shall follow applicable law and all federal and state
26 guidelines in maintaining religious neutrality and accommodating the diverse religious views,
27 traditions, and perspectives of students in the school. A course under this section shall not
28 endorse, favor, or promote, or disfavor or show hostility toward, any particular religion or
29 nonreligious faith or religious perspective. The West Virginia Board of Education, in complying
30 with this section, shall not violate any provision of the United States Constitution or federal law,
31 the West Virginia Constitution or any state law, or any administrative regulations of the United
32 States Department of Education or the West Virginia Department of Education.

§18-28A-2. Authorization for school-based decision making councils; curriculum;
purpose.

1 (a) A school-based decision-making council under administrative regulations of the West
2 Virginia Board of Education may offer students in grade nine (9) or above:

3 (1) An elective social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures, Old Testament of the Bible;

4 (2) An elective social studies course on the New Testament of the Bible; or

5 (3) An elective social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament of
6 the Bible.

7 (b) The purpose of a course under this section is to:

8 (1) Teach students knowledge of biblical content, characters, poetry, and narratives that
9 are prerequisites to understanding contemporary society and culture, including literature, art,
10 music, mores, oratory, and public policy; and

- 11 (2) Familiarize students with, as applicable:
- 12 (A) The contents of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;
- 13 (B) The history of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;
- 14 (C) The literary style and structure of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament; and
- 15 (D) The influence of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament on law, history,
- 16 government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values, and culture.
- 17 (c) A student shall not be required to use a specific translation as the sole text of the
- 18 Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament and may use as the basic textbook a different translation
- 19 of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament from that chosen by the school council.
- 20 (d) A course offered under this section shall follow applicable law and all federal and state
- 21 guidelines in maintaining religious neutrality and accommodating the diverse religious views,
- 22 traditions, and perspectives of students in the school. A course under this section shall not
- 23 endorse, favor, or promote, or disfavor or show hostility toward, any particular religion or
- 24 nonreligious faith or religious perspective. A school-based decision-making council, in complying
- 25 with this section, shall not violate any provision of the United States Constitution or federal law,
- 26 the West Virginia Constitution or any state law, or any administrative regulations of the United
- 27 States Department of Education or the West Virginia Department of Education.
- 28 (e) The principal may authorize the display of historic artifacts, monuments, symbols, and
- 29 texts, including, but not limited to, religious materials, in conjunction with a course of study that
- 30 includes an elective course in history, civilization, ethics, comparative religion, literature, or other
- 31 subject area that uses such artifacts, monuments, symbols, and texts as instructional material if
- 32 the display is:
- 33 (1) Appropriate to the overall educational purpose of the course; and
- 34 (2) Consistent with the provisions of this code.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to establish a Bible literacy course in public schools.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.