

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2024 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 5302

By Delegates Coop-Gonzalez, Ridenour, Foggin,
Ross, Brooks, Chiarelli, Burkhammer, Foster, and
Vance

[Introduced January 29, 2024; 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 section,
 2 designated §18-33-9, relating to requiring public elementary schools and secondary
 3 schools to display in a conspicuous place in each classroom of the school a durable poster
 4 or framed copy of the Ten Commandments that meets certain requirements, listing
 5 requirements for the posters or framed and uses for surplus posters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 33. STUDENT RELIGIOUS LIBERTIES.
§18-33-9. Placement of the Ten Commandments in classrooms.

1 (a) A public elementary or secondary school shall display in a conspicuous place in each
 2 classroom of the school a durable poster or framed copy of the Ten Commandments that meets
 3 the requirements of subsection (b).

4 (b) A poster or framed copy of the Ten Commandments described by subsection (a) must:

5 (1) Include the text of the Ten Commandments as provided by subsection (c) in a size and
 6 typeface that is legible to a person with average vision from anywhere in the classroom in which
 7 the poster or framed copy is displayed; and

8 (2) Be at least 16 inches wide and 20 inches tall.

9 (c) The text of the poster or framed copy of the Ten Commandments described by
 10 Subsection (a) must read as follows:

11 "The Ten Commandments

12 I AM the LORD thy God.

13 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

14 Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven images.

15 Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.

16 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

17 Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord
 18 thy God giveth thee.

- 19 Thou shalt not kill.
- 20 Thou shalt not commit adultery.
- 21 Thou shalt not steal.
- 22 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
- 23 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.
- 24 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his
- 25 cattle, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."
- 26 (d) A public elementary or secondary school in which each classroom does not include a
- 27 poster or framed copy of the Ten Commandments as required by subsection (a) must:
- 28 (1) Accept any offer of a privately donated poster or framed copy of the Ten
- 29 Commandments provided that the poster or copy:
- 30 (A) Meets the requirements of subsection (b); and
- 31 (B) Does not contain any additional content; and
- 32 (2) Display the poster or framed copy as specified in subsection (a).
- 33 (e) If a public elementary or secondary school has a poster or framed copy of the Ten
- 34 Commandments in each classroom that does not meet the requirements of subsection (b), the
- 35 school may replace the posters or copies with posters or copies that meet the requirements of
- 36 subsection (b) using public funds or by accepting a private donation.
- 37 (f) A public elementary or secondary school must offer a poster or framed copy of the Ten
- 38 Commandments described by subsection (a) in the school's possession that is not needed for
- 39 display in a classroom as a donation to another public elementary or secondary school.
- 40 (g) This Act applies beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to require public elementary schools and secondary schools to display in a conspicuous place in each classroom of the school a durable poster or framed copy of the Ten Commandments that meets certain requirements.

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