

HOUSE BILL 287

By Byrd

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 6, Part 10, relative to Celebrate Freedom Week.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 6, Part 10, is amended by adding the following language as a new section:

(a) To educate students about the sacrifices made for freedom in the founding of this country and the values on which this country was founded, the week in which September 17 falls, or another full school week as determined by an LEA, is designated as Celebrate Freedom Week in public schools. For purposes of this subsection (a), Sunday shall be considered the first day of the week.

(b) The department of education, in cooperation with other state agencies and private entities who voluntarily participate to promote the purposes of this section, shall promote Celebrate Freedom Week through a coordinated program.

(c) No later than December 31, 2017, the state board of education shall adopt rules requiring each social studies class to include, during Celebrate Freedom Week, age-appropriate instruction concerning the original intent, meaning, and importance of the declaration of independence and the United States constitution, including the bill of rights. Each document shall be taught in its historical context. There shall be no content-based censorship of the social studies class taught pursuant to this section.

(d) The rules adopted pursuant to subsection (c) shall provide for the study of the declaration of independence to include study of the relationship between ideas expressed in that document and subsequent American history, including:

- (1) The rich diversity of American people as a nation of immigrants;
- (2) The American revolution;
- (3) The formulation of the United States constitution; and
- (4) The abolitionist movement, including the emancipation proclamation

and the women's suffrage movement.

(e) In adopting rules under subsection (c), the state board of education shall:

(1) Require that, during Celebrate Freedom Week or other week of instruction prescribed under subsection (c), students in grades three (3) through twelve (12) study and recite the following language from the declaration of independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; and

(2) Excuse any student from reciting the language in subdivision (e)(1):

(A) Whose parent or legal guardian submits to the district a written request that the student be excused from recitation;

(B) Who has a conscientious objection to the recitation; or

(C) Who is the child of a representative of a foreign government to whom the United States government extends diplomatic immunity.

SECTION 2. For purposes of promulgating rules, this act shall take effect upon becoming law, the public welfare requiring it. For all other purposes, this act shall take effect July 1, 2018.