

Louisiana First State to Mandate Display of 10 Commandments in Schools

Louisiana has become the first state to require the Ten Commandments to be displayed in every public school classroom.

Republican Governor Jeff Landry signed HB71 into law on Wednesday, June 19, after it passed in the Louisiana Senate in a 30-8 vote and then passed in the state House by a 79-16 vote last month.

The American Civil Liberties Union vows to challenge the law, and the case could go to the U.S. Supreme Court.

If the law survives legal challenges, every Louisiana classroom which receives state funding, from kindergarten to the university level, will be required to display the commandments "on a poster or framed document that is at least 11 inches by 14 inches." The commandments displays would be paid for by private donations so the state isn't funding them.

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Louisiana State Rep. Dodie Horton (R) introduced the bill and said implementing the Ten Commandments is the "basis of all laws in Louisiana" and honors the country's religious origins, according to The New Orleans Advocate.

"I hope and I pray that Louisiana is the first state to allow moral code to be placed back in the classrooms," she said. "Since I was in kindergarten (at a private school), it was always on the wall. I learned there was a God, and I knew to honor him and his laws."

All the "no" votes to the bill came from Democrats. "I didn't

have to learn the Ten Commandments in school. We went to Sunday school,” said Sen. Royce Duplessis (D-New Orleans) who identifies as a practicing Catholic. “You want your kids to learn about the Ten Commandments, take them to church.”

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Duplessis also doesn't want to deal with the legal challenges. “We're going to spend valuable state resources defending the law when we really need to be teaching our kids how to read and write,” he said. “I don't think this is appropriate for us to mandate.”

The American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU of Louisiana, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Freedom from Religion Foundation and the Southern Poverty Law Center have released a statement calling the mandate unconstitutional. “Our public schools are not Sunday schools,” it reads, “and students of all faiths—or no faith—should feel welcome in them.”

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