

Ten Commandments Kicked Out of Arkansas Classrooms

The U.S. District Court for the Western District of Arkansas shot down a law requiring that Arkansas schools display the Ten Commandments. Six school districts are now forbidden from featuring the display.

“Nothing could possibly justify hanging the Ten Commandments—with or without historical context—in a calculus, chemistry, French, or woodworking class, to name a few,” Judge Timothy Brooks wrote.

“Act 573’s purpose is only to display a sacred, religious text in a prominent place in every public-school classroom,” the filing added. “And the only reason to display a sacred, religious text in every classroom is to proselytize to children. The State has said the quiet part out loud.”



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“Act 573 must be permanently enjoined,” Brooks further wrote. “Failing to do so would violate the Establishment Clause rights of all Arkansas public-school children and their parents and also violate plaintiffs’ free exercise rights. The law serves no educational purpose, as the State admits, and consequently deprives plaintiffs of their rights. Such deprivations, ‘even for minimal periods of time, constitute irreparable injury.’”

John C. Williams, the legal director for ACLU of Arkansas, said in a statement that the ruling is a “resounding affirmation that public schools are not Sunday schools.” Williams argued that “Arkansas lawmakers cannot sidestep the First Amendment by mandating that a particular version of the Ten Commandments be displayed in every classroom.”

Under the law, "A durable poster or framed copy of a historical representation of the Ten Commandments" is to be displayed by schools and higher education institutions. The display must be at least sixteen inches by twenty inches and "include the text of the Ten Commandments in a size and typeface that is legible to a person with average vision from anywhere in the room in which the durable poster or framed copy is displayed."

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