

Texas Ten Commandments Bill Passes House—Now It's Up to the Governor

The Texas House has passed the final version of a law requiring the Ten Commandments to be displayed in every public school classroom in the state. It's now coming to Republican Governor Greg Abbott for his signature. The ACLU and other civil liberties groups announced they'll sue the state to stop it from being enforced.

The House version of the law, SB-10, passed on Monday, requires the state to defend against any legal challenges, rather than the school districts.

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The bill was sponsored by Sen. Phil King (R-Weatherford) and requires every classroom to visibly display a poster that's at least 16 by 20 inches featuring a specific version of the Ten Commandments. The poster can't include any text other than the language laid out in the bill, and no other similar posters may be displayed.

"It is incumbent on all of us to follow God's law, and I think we would all be better off if we did," Rep. Candy Noble (R-Lucas) said during an earlier House vote.

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"Placing the Ten Commandments and national motto on schoolhouse walls is a great way to remind students of the foundations of American and Texas law. And bringing state law in line with what the U.S. Supreme Court has said about prayer in schools should make it clear to school administrators that

student and teacher prayer is completely Constitutional. First Liberty was grateful to support these important bills and looks forward to them being signed into law by Governor Abbott," said Matt Krause with First Liberty Institute.

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Critics argue the bill violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, which prohibits the federal government from creating a state religion.

The ACLU and the ACLU Texas joined Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the Freedom from Religion Foundation in announcing plans Thursday to challenge the legislation requiring schools to post the Ten Commandments.

"S.B. 10 is blatantly unconstitutional. We will be working with Texas public school families to prepare a lawsuit to stop this violation of students' and parents' First Amendment rights," the ACLU wrote, calling the measure "religiously coercive."

Supporters of the bill argue that U.S. Supreme Court decisions, including *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, would allow SB 10 to hold up in court.

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"For 200 years, the Ten Commandments were displayed in public buildings and classrooms across America," wrote King in his bill analysis. "The Court has ... provided a test that considers whether a governmental display of religious content comports with America's history and tradition. Now that the legal landscape has changed, it is time for Texas to pass SB 10 and restore the history and tradition of the Ten Commandments in our state and our nation."

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