

By Representative Melvin

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to recitation of the  
3           Declaration of Independence; creating s.  
4           233.0659, F.S.; providing legislative findings;  
5           requiring a portion of the Declaration of  
6           Independence to be recited daily by public  
7           school students; providing an effective date.

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9   Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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11           Section 1.   Section 233.0659, Florida Statutes, is  
12   created to read:

13           233.0659 Recitation of the Declaration of  
14   Independence.--

15           (1) The Legislature finds and declares that:

16           (a) The horrific attack on America and its ideals on  
17   September 11, 2001, mandated that a war be declared against  
18   the inhumane barbarism of terrorists. It promises to be a long  
19   war. The strongest weapon in our arsenal is the firm American  
20   character informed by the reasoned principles of the  
21   Declaration of Independence. Reason is the strongest weapon  
22   against the mindless fear the terrorist seeks.

23           (b) In writing the Declaration of Independence, in  
24   addition to listing the specific grievances of the American  
25   colonies against the British King and Parliament, Thomas  
26   Jefferson set forth in 55 words a statement of the fundamental  
27   human principles of government upon which the new nation was  
28   to be founded, and this statement continues to have resonance  
29   long after the contents of the remainder of the document have  
30   been forgotten.

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1       (2) To underscore the importance of this statement in  
2 forming American character, at the beginning of each school  
3 day, public school principals and teachers shall conduct an  
4 oral recitation by students of the following words of the  
5 Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be  
6 self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are  
7 endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that  
8 among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.  
9 That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among  
10 Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the  
11 governed."

12       (3) Student recitation of this statement from the  
13 Declaration of Independence shall serve to reaffirm the  
14 American ideals of individual liberty.

15               Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2002.

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18   HOUSE SUMMARY

19               Requires public school students to recite daily a portion  
20 of the Declaration of Independence to underscore its  
21 importance in forming American character and to reaffirm  
22 the American ideals of individual liberty.  
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