

HM1619

2004

House Memorial

1
2 A memorial to the Congress of the United States, urging
3 Congress to propose an amendment to the Constitution of
4 the United States, for submission to the several states,
5 to allow the people of the United States and the several
6 states the freedom to exercise their religion in public
7 places.

8
9 WHEREAS, the Ten Commandments appear over the bench where
10 the United States Supreme Court Justices sit, thus showing the
11 source from whence our laws and the government power of the
12 state are derived, and

13 WHEREAS, the colonial governments that preceded the Federal
14 Government adopted the Ten Commandments not as an object of
15 worship or an icon, but as the basis for their civil and
16 criminal law, as illustrated on April 3, 1644, when the New
17 Haven Colony Charter was adopted establishing that "the judicial
18 laws of God, as they were delivered to Moses be a rule to all
19 courts in this jurisdiction," and

20 WHEREAS, when signing the Declaration of Independence on
21 August 2, 1776, Samuel Adams, the "Father of the Revolution,"
22 emphasized its Biblical presuppositions: "We have this day
23 restored the sovereign to whom all men ought to be obedient. He
24 reigns in heaven and from the rising to the setting of the sun,
25 let His kingdom come," and

26 WHEREAS, on August 20, 1789, Congressman Fisher Ames from
27 Massachusetts proposed the wording of the First Amendment, which
28 was adopted by the House of Representatives in the first session
29 of the Congress of the United States, and his writings clearly
30 demonstrate that the framers of the United States Constitution

HM1619

2004

31 never intended the First Amendment to be so interpreted as to
 32 remove the Bible from public buildings: "We are spending less
 33 time in the classroom on the Bible which should be the principal
 34 text in our schools....," and

35 WHEREAS, in a letter dated August 18, 1790, President
 36 George Washington wrote to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport,
 37 Rhode Island, "All possess alike liberty of conscience and
 38 immunities of citizenship.... May the children of the stock of
 39 Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the
 40 good will of the other inhabitants; while every one shall sit in
 41 safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none
 42 to make him afraid," and

43 WHEREAS, in his "Farewell Address" of September 19, 1796,
 44 George Washington pointed out the connection between the faith
 45 of the nation and its political prosperity when he declared, "Of
 46 all the dispositions and habits which lead to political
 47 prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports,"
 48 and

49 WHEREAS, acknowledging the Bible as an integral part of the
 50 fabric of our society on September 11, 1777, the Continental
 51 Congress adopted a resolution to import 20,000 Bibles from
 52 Holland and Scotland, as the colonies were at war with England,
 53 and

54 WHEREAS, on May 29, 1845, the day before his death,
 55 President Andrew Jackson stated, "My lamp of life is nearly out,
 56 and the last glimmer has come. I am ready to depart when called.
 57 The Bible is true. The principles and statutes of the Holy Book
 58 have been the rule of my life, and I have tried to conform to
 59 its spirit as nearly as possible. Upon that sacred volume I rest
 60 my hope for eternal salvation, through the merits and blood of

HM1619

2004

61 our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ," and

62 WHEREAS, President John Quincy Adams, the sixth President
63 of the United States, wrote concerning the civil function of the
64 Mosaic law, "The law given from Sinai was a civil and municipal
65 as well as a moral and religious code: it contained many
66 statutes...of universal application...laws essential to the
67 existence of men in society and most of which have been enacted
68 by every nation which ever professed any code of laws," and

69 WHEREAS, in a June 1778 letter to her son, John Quincy
70 Adams, Abigail Adams reinforced noble values and a sense of
71 ultimate accountability to God which she believed to be the
72 foundation of true greatness: "Great learning and superior
73 abilities, should you ever possess them, will be of little value
74 and small estimation, unless virtue, honor, truth, and integrity
75 are added to them. Adhere to those religious sentiments and
76 principles which were early instilled into your mind, and
77 remember that you are accountable to your Maker for all your
78 words and actions," and

79 WHEREAS, on February 29, 1892, the United States Supreme
80 Court, in a unanimous decision that has never been overruled,
81 cited 66 organic authorities that show the Bible's singular
82 influence on America: "There is no dissonance in these
83 declarations. There is a universal language pervading them all
84 having one meaning: they affirm and reaffirm that this is a
85 religious nation. These are not individual sayings, declarations
86 of private persons; they are organic utterances; they speak the
87 voice of the entire group. These authorities were collected to
88 support the historical conclusion that no purpose of action
89 against religion can be imputed any legislation, state or
90 nation, because this is a religious people. This is historically

HM1619

2004

91 true. From the discovery of this continent to the present hour,
92 there is a single voice making this affirmation...we find
93 everywhere a clear recognition of the same truth...this is a
94 Christian nation," and

95 WHEREAS, on May 7, 1911, President Woodrow Wilson,
96 addressing the Tercentenary Celebration of the Translation of
97 the Bible into the English language, stated, "Moreover, the
98 Bible does what is so invaluable in human life it classifies
99 moral values. It apprises us that men are not judged according
100 to their wits, but according to their characters that the last
101 of every man's reputation is his truthfulness, his squaring his
102 conduct with the standards that he knew to be the standards of
103 purity and rectitude. How many a man we appraise, ladies and
104 gentlemen, as great today whom we do not admire as noble! A man
105 may have great power and small character," and

106 WHEREAS, in his February 22, 1990, proclamation designating
107 1990 as The International Year of Bible Reading, President
108 George H. W. Bush declared, "The Bible has had a critical impact
109 upon the development of Western civilization. Western
110 literature, art, and music are filled with images and ideas that
111 can be traced to its pages. More important, our moral tradition
112 has been shaped by the laws and teachings it contains. It was a
113 biblical view of man -- one affirming the dignity and worth of
114 the human person, made in the image of our Creator -- that
115 inspired the principles upon which the United States is founded.
116 President Jackson called the Bible 'the rock on which our
117 Republic rests' because he knew that it shaped the Founding
118 Fathers' concept of individual liberty and their vision of a
119 free and just society. The Bible has not only influenced the
120 development of our Nation's values and institutions but also

HM1619

2004

121 enriched the daily lives of millions of men and women who have
122 looked to it for comfort, hope, and guidance. On the American
123 frontier, the Bible was often the only book a family owned. For
124 those pioneers living far from any church or school, it served
125 both as a source of religious instruction and as the primary
126 text from which children learned to read. The historic speeches
127 of Abraham Lincoln and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., provide
128 compelling evidence of the role Scripture played in shaping the
129 struggle against slavery and discrimination. Today the Bible
130 continues to give courage and direction to those who seek truth
131 and righteousness. In recognizing its enduring value, we recall
132 the words of the prophet Isaiah, who declared 'The grass
133 withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall
134 stand forever.' Containing revelations of God's intervention in
135 human history, the Bible offers moving testimony to His love for
136 mankind. Treasuring the Bible as a source of knowledge and
137 inspiration, President Abraham Lincoln called this Great Book
138 'the best gift God has given to man.' President Lincoln believed
139 that the Bible not only reveals the infinite goodness of our
140 Creator, but also reminds us of our worth as individuals and our
141 responsibilities toward one another," and

142 WHEREAS, the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights states,
143 "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of
144 religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging
145 the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the
146 people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for
147 a redress of grievances," and

148 WHEREAS, recent court rulings have prevented the displaying
149 of the Ten Commandments and have been the cause of the removal
150 of these documents from public buildings, and

HM1619

2004

151 WHEREAS, 80 percent of the people are in favor of
 152 displaying the Ten Commandments in public places, and

153 WHEREAS, the Legislature finds the Ten Commandments to be
 154 the precedent legal code of the State of Florida which has
 155 provided the foundation for many of the civil and criminal
 156 statutes enacted into law throughout the history of the state,
 157 and

158 WHEREAS, under Article V of the Constitution of the United
 159 States, amendments to such constitution may be proposed by the
 160 United States Congress whenever two-thirds of both chambers deem
 161 it necessary, NOW, THEREFORE,

162
 163 Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

164
 165 That the Legislature of the State of Florida hereby
 166 respectively petitions the United States Congress to propose an
 167 amendment to the Constitution of the United States, for
 168 submission to the several states for ratification, to allow the
 169 people of the United States and the several states the freedom
 170 to exercise their religion in public places.

171 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the text of the proposed
 172 amendment to the Constitution of the United States should read
 173 substantially as follows:

174 ARTICLE XXVIII

175 Nothing in the Constitution shall be construed to prohibit
 176 or otherwise limit the practice of individual or group prayer,
 177 the reading or the posting of the Ten Commandments, the recital
 178 of the Pledge of Allegiance, and the display of the motto "In
 179 God We Trust" or similar phrases from historical documents
 180 referencing God in any public place, including a school; nor

HM1619

2004

181 shall it require any person to join in prayer or other religious
182 activity.

183 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be
184 spread upon the journals of the House of Representatives and
185 Senate of the State of Florida and that copies of this memorial
186 be forwarded to the President of the United States, to the
187 President of the United States Senate, to the Speaker of the
188 United States House of Representatives, and to each member of
189 the Florida delegation to the United States Congress.