

By Senator Wise

5-1617-04

See HM 1619

1                                   Senate Memorial No.\_\_\_\_

2           A memorial to the Congress of the United

3           States, urging Congress to propose an amendment

4           to the Constitution of the United States, for

5           submission to the several states, to allow the

6           people of the United States and the several

7           states the freedom to exercise their religion

8           in public places.

9

10           WHEREAS, the Ten Commandments appear over the bench

11          where the United States Supreme Court Justices sit, thus

12          showing the source from whence our laws and the government

13          power of the state are derived, and

14           WHEREAS, the colonial governments that preceded the

15          Federal Government adopted the Ten Commandments not as an

16          object of worship or an icon, but as the basis for their civil

17          and criminal law, as illustrated on April 3, 1644, when the

18          New Haven Colony Charter was adopted establishing that "the

19          judicial laws of God, as they were delivered to Moses be a

20          rule to all courts in this jurisdiction," and

21           WHEREAS, when signing the Declaration of Independence

22          on August 2, 1776, Samuel Adams, the "Father of the

23          Revolution," emphasized its Biblical presuppositions: "We have

24          this day restored the sovereign to whom all men ought to be

25          obedient. He reigns in heaven and from the rising to the

26          setting of the sun, let His kingdom come," and

27           WHEREAS, on August 20, 1789, Congressman Fisher Ames

28          from Massachusetts proposed the wording of the First

29          Amendment, which was adopted by the House of Representatives

30          in the first session of the Congress of the United States, and

31          his writings clearly demonstrate that the framers of the

1 United States Constitution never intended the First Amendment  
2 to be so interpreted as to remove the Bible from public  
3 buildings: "We are spending less time in the classroom on the  
4 Bible which should be the principal text in our schools....,"  
5 and

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

14 WHEREAS, in his "Farewell Address" of September 19,  
15 1796, George Washington pointed out the connection between the  
16 faith of the nation and its political prosperity when he  
17 declared, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to  
18 political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable  
19 supports," and

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

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

1 merits and blood of our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus  
2 Christ," and

3           WHEREAS, President John Quincy Adams, the sixth  
4 President of the United States, wrote concerning the civil  
5 function of the Mosaic law, "The law given from Sinai was a  
6 civil and municipal as well as a moral and religious code: it  
7 contained many statutes...of universal application...laws  
8 essential to the existence of men in society and most of which  
9 have been enacted by every nation which ever professed any  
10 code of laws," and

11           WHEREAS, in a June 1778 letter to her son, John Quincy  
12 Adams, Abigail Adams reinforced noble values and a sense of  
13 ultimate accountability to God which she believed to be the  
14 foundation of true greatness: "Great learning and superior  
15 abilities, should you ever possess them, will be of little  
16 value and small estimation, unless virtue, honor, truth, and  
17 integrity are added to them. Adhere to those religious  
18 sentiments and principles which were early instilled into your  
19 mind, and remember that you are accountable to your Maker for  
20 all your words and actions," and

21           WHEREAS, on February 29, 1892, the United States  
22 Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision that has never been  
23 overruled, cited 66 organic authorities that show the Bible's  
24 singular influence on America: "There is no dissonance in  
25 these declarations. There is a universal language pervading  
26 them all having one meaning: they affirm and reaffirm that  
27 this is a religious nation. These are not individual sayings,  
28 declarations of private persons; they are organic utterances;  
29 they speak the voice of the entire group. These authorities  
30 were collected to support the historical conclusion that no  
31 purpose of action against religion can be imputed any

1 | legislation, state or nation, because this is a religious  
2 | people. This is historically true. From the discovery of this  
3 | continent to the present hour, there is a single voice making  
4 | this affirmation...we find everywhere a clear recognition of  
5 | the same truth...this is a Christian nation," and

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

17 |         WHEREAS, in his February 22, 1990, proclamation  
18 | designating 1990 as The International Year of Bible Reading,  
19 | President George H. W. Bush declared, "The Bible has had a  
20 | critical impact upon the development of Western civilization.  
21 | Western literature, art, and music are filled with images and  
22 | ideas that can be traced to its pages. More important, our  
23 | moral tradition has been shaped by the laws and teachings it  
24 | contains. It was a biblical view of man--one affirming the  
25 | dignity and worth of the human person, made in the image of  
26 | our Creator--that inspired the principles upon which the  
27 | United States is founded. President Jackson called the Bible  
28 | 'the rock on which our Republic rests' because he knew that it  
29 | shaped the Founding Fathers' concept of individual liberty and  
30 | their vision of a free and just society. The Bible has not  
31 | only influenced the development of our Nation's values and

1 institutions but also enriched the daily lives of millions of  
2 men and women who have looked to it for comfort, hope, and  
3 guidance. On the American frontier, the Bible was often the  
4 only book a family owned. For those pioneers living far from  
5 any church or school, it served both as a source of religious  
6 instruction and as the primary text from which children  
7 learned to read. The historic speeches of Abraham Lincoln and  
8 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., provide compelling evidence of  
9 the role Scripture played in shaping the struggle against  
10 slavery and discrimination. Today the Bible continues to give  
11 courage and direction to those who seek truth and  
12 righteousness. In recognizing its enduring value, we recall  
13 the words of the prophet Isaiah, who declared 'The grass  
14 withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall  
15 stand forever.' Containing revelations of God's intervention  
16 in human history, the Bible offers moving testimony to His  
17 love for mankind. Treasuring the Bible as a source of  
18 knowledge and inspiration, President Abraham Lincoln called  
19 this Great Book 'the best gift God has given to man.'  
20 President Lincoln believed that the Bible not only reveals the  
21 infinite goodness of our Creator, but also reminds us of our  
22 worth as individuals and our responsibilities toward one  
23 another," and

24 WHEREAS, the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights  
25 states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an  
26 establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise  
27 thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press;  
28 or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to  
29 petition the Government for a redress of grievances," and  
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1           WHEREAS, recent court rulings have prevented the  
2 displaying of the Ten Commandments and have been the cause of  
3 the removal of these documents from public buildings, and

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

6           WHEREAS, the Legislature finds the Ten Commandments to  
7 be the precedent legal code of the State of Florida which has  
8 provided the foundation for many of the civil and criminal  
9 statutes enacted into law throughout the history of the state,  
10 and

11           WHEREAS, under Article V of the Constitution of the  
12 United States, amendments to such constitution may be proposed  
13 by the United States Congress whenever two-thirds of both  
14 chambers deem it necessary, NOW, THEREFORE,

15  
16 Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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18           That the Legislature of the State of Florida  
19 respectfully petitions the United States Congress to propose  
20 an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, for  
21 submission to the several states for ratification, to allow  
22 the people of the United States and the several states the  
23 freedom to exercise their religion in public places.

24           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the text of the proposed  
25 amendment to the Constitution of the United States should read  
26 substantially as follows:

27                           ARTICLE XXVIII

28           Nothing in the Constitution shall be construed to  
29 prohibit or otherwise limit the practice of individual or  
30 group prayer, the reading or the posting of the Ten  
31 Commandments, the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance, and the

1 display of the motto "In God We Trust" or similar phrases from  
2 historical documents referencing God in any public place,  
3 including a school; nor shall it require any person to join in  
4 prayer or other religious activity.

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be  
6 forwarded to the President of the United States, to the  
7 President of the United States Senate, to the Speaker of the  
8 United States House of Representatives, and to each member of  
9 the Florida delegation to the United States Congress.

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