

By Senator Rodriguez

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to religious expression and classroom
3 requirements in K-12 schools; providing short titles;
4 prohibiting a school district from discriminating
5 against students, parents, or school personnel on the
6 basis of religious viewpoints or religious expression;
7 prohibiting penalty or reward for a student's
8 religious expression in coursework, artwork, and other
9 specified assignments; authorizing a student to wear
10 clothing, accessories, and jewelry that display
11 religious messages or symbols; authorizing a student
12 to pray or engage in religious activities or
13 expression; authorizing a student to organize prayer
14 groups, religious clubs, and other religious
15 gatherings; prohibiting a school district from
16 preventing school personnel from participating in
17 voluntary, student-initiated religious activities on
18 school grounds under specified circumstances;
19 requiring that a school district provide religious
20 groups with equal access to school facilities;
21 authorizing religious groups to advertise or announce
22 meetings in the same manner and to the same extent as
23 secular groups; requiring that a school district adopt
24 a limited public forum policy and deliver a disclaimer
25 at school events; requiring that the Department of
26 Education develop and publish a model policy regarding
27 a limited public forum and religious expression;
28 requiring that each district school board adopt and
29 implement such model policy; amending s. 1003.44,

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30 F.S.; requiring the national anthem to be played at
31 the beginning of each school day; requiring school
32 districts to conduct a public awareness campaign for
33 specified purposes; providing an effective date.
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35 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
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37 Section 1. This act may be cited as the "Florida Religious
38 Liberty Awareness and Activation Act."

39 Section 2. Religious expression in public schools.—

40 (1) This section may be cited as the "Florida Student and
41 School Personnel Religious Liberties Act."

42 (2) A school district may not discriminate against a
43 student, parent, or school personnel on the basis of a religious
44 viewpoint or religious expression. A school district shall treat
45 a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint on an
46 otherwise permissible subject in the same manner that the school
47 district treats a student's voluntary expression of a secular
48 viewpoint.

49 (3) (a) A student may express his or her religious beliefs
50 in coursework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments
51 free from discrimination. A student's homework and classroom
52 assignments shall be evaluated, regardless of their religious
53 content, based on expected academic standards relating to the
54 course curriculum and requirements. A student may not be
55 penalized or rewarded based on the religious content of his or
56 her work if the coursework, artwork, or other written or oral
57 assignments require a student's viewpoint to be expressed.

58 (b) A student may wear clothing, accessories, and jewelry

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59 that display a religious message or symbol in the same manner
60 and to the same extent that secular types of clothing,
61 accessories, and jewelry that display messages or symbols are
62 permitted to be worn.

63 (4) (a) A student may pray or engage in religious activities
64 or religious expression before, during, and after the school day
65 in the same manner and to the same extent that a student may
66 engage in secular activities or expression. A student may
67 organize prayer groups, religious clubs, and other religious
68 gatherings before, during, and after the school day in the same
69 manner and to the same extent that a student is permitted to
70 organize secular activities and groups.

71 (b)1. A school district may not prevent school personnel
72 from participating in religious activities on school grounds
73 that are initiated by students at reasonable times before or
74 after the school day if such activities are voluntary and do not
75 conflict with the responsibilities or assignments of such
76 personnel.

77 2. A school district shall comply with the federal
78 requirements in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which
79 prohibit an employer from discriminating against an employee on
80 the basis of religion.

81 (c) A school district shall provide a religious group with
82 access to the same school facilities for assembling as provided
83 to secular groups without discrimination based on the religious
84 content of the group's expression. A group that meets for prayer
85 or other religious speech may advertise or announce its meetings
86 in the same manner and to the same extent that a secular group
87 may advertise or announce its meetings.

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88 (5) (a) A school district shall adopt a policy that
89 establishes a limited public forum for student speakers at any
90 school event at which a student is to speak publicly. The
91 limited public forum policy shall require the school district
92 to:

93 1. Provide the forum in a manner that does not discriminate
94 against a student's voluntary expression of a religious
95 viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject;

96 2. Provide a method based on neutral criteria for the
97 selection of student speakers at school events, activities, and
98 graduation ceremonies;

99 3. Ensure that a student speaker does not engage in
100 obscene, vulgar, offensively lewd, or indecent speech; and

101 4. State in written or oral form that the student's speech
102 does not reflect the endorsement, sponsorship, position, or
103 expression of the school district.

104 (b) The school district shall deliver the disclaimer
105 required in subparagraph (a)4. at all graduation events and any
106 other event at which a student speaks publicly.

107 (c) Student expression of a religious viewpoint on an
108 otherwise permissible subject may not be excluded from the
109 limited public forum.

110 (6) The Department of Education shall develop a model
111 policy regarding a limited public forum and voluntary expression
112 of religious viewpoints by students and school personnel in
113 public schools pursuant to this section. The department shall
114 publish the model policy on its website. Each district school
115 board shall adopt and implement the department's model policy.

116 Section 3. Subsection (1) of section 1003.44, Florida

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117 Statutes, is amended to read:

118 1003.44 Patriotic programs; rules.—

119 (1) (a) Each district school board may adopt rules to
120 require, in all of the schools of the district, programs of a
121 patriotic nature to encourage greater respect for the government
122 of the United States and its national anthem and flag, subject
123 always to other existing pertinent laws of the United States or
124 of the state. The national anthem must be played at the
125 beginning of each school day after the completion of the moment
126 of silence under s. 1003.45. When the national anthem is played,
127 students and all civilians shall stand at attention, men
128 removing the headdress, except when such headdress is worn for
129 religious purposes. The pledge of allegiance to the flag, "I
130 pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America
131 and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God,
132 indivisible, with liberty and justice for all," shall be
133 rendered by students standing with the right hand over the
134 heart. The pledge of allegiance to the flag shall be recited at
135 the beginning of the day in each public elementary, middle, and
136 high school in the state. Each student shall be informed by a
137 written notice published in the student handbook or a similar
138 publication pursuant to s. 1006.07(2) that the student has the
139 right not to participate in reciting the pledge. Upon written
140 request by his or her parent, the student must be excused from
141 reciting the pledge, including standing and placing the right
142 hand over his or her heart. When the pledge is given, unexcused
143 students must show full respect to the flag by standing at
144 attention, men removing the headdress, except when such
145 headdress is worn for religious purposes, as provided by Pub. L.

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146 ch. 77-435, s. 7, approved June 22, 1942, 56 Stat. 377, as
147 amended by Pub. L. ch. 77-806, 56 Stat. 1074, approved December
148 22, 1942.

149 (b) Each school district shall conduct a public awareness
150 campaign about the display of the state motto, "In God We
151 Trust," in district schools and buildings pursuant to subsection
152 (4) and the inclusion of a moment of silence at the beginning of
153 the school day pursuant to s. 1003.45.

154 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.