

Senate Bill 68

By: Senators Ligon, Jr. of the 3rd, Shafer of the 48th, Albers of the 56th, Loudermilk of the 14th, Miller of the 49th and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 elementary and secondary education, so as to establish Celebrate Freedom Week; to provide
3 for the posting of historical documents; to require the Department of Education to develop
4 online resources and instructional support; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting
5 laws; and for other purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to elementary and
9 secondary education, is amended by adding a new article to read as follows:

10 "ARTICLE 19A

11 20-2-1020.

12 (a) To educate students about the sacrifices made for freedom in the founding of this
13 country and the values, principles, and philosophies on which this country was founded,
14 the full week in September which includes Constitution Day, September 17, shall be
15 recognized in public elementary, middle, and high schools in this state as Celebrate
16 Freedom Week. Celebrate Freedom Week shall include at least three hours of appropriate
17 instruction, as determined by each local school system, in each social studies class. The
18 instruction shall include an age-appropriate, in-depth study of the intent, meaning, and
19 importance of the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution,
20 including the Bill of Rights, in their historical context including the background of the
21 colonial era along with instruction about the Founding Fathers, such as the signers of the
22 Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, the first six Presidents,
23 and particularly George Washington and key individuals who served with him in war and
24 in his presidential cabinets. During Celebrate Freedom Week, a local school system shall
25 require students in grades three through 12 to read at least one book that focuses on the
26 Founding Era, either the times and events or the people who made significant contributions

27 to independence or toward establishing the new federal or state governments. In addition,
 28 a local school system shall require students in grades three through 12 to recite at least one
 29 of the following three excerpts at least once during the week, and local school systems are
 30 encouraged to require daily recitations from one or all of these excerpts at the beginning
 31 of each school day:

32 (1) From the Declaration of Independence:

33 We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are
 34 endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life,
 35 Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness – That to secure these Rights, Governments are
 36 instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed;

37 (2) From the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution:

38 We the people of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish
 39 Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the
 40 general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do
 41 ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.; or

42 (3) From the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights:

43 Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the
 44 free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of
 45 the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of
 46 grievances.

47 (b) Upon written request from a student's parent or guardian, a local school system shall
 48 excuse the student from the recitation required by this Code section. This Code section
 49 shall not apply to a student who:

50 (1) Has a conscientious objection to the recitation; or

51 (2) Is the child of a representative of a foreign government to whom the United States
 52 government extends diplomatic immunity.

53 (c) This Code section shall apply beginning with the 2014-2015 school year.

54 20-2-1021.

55 (a) To increase student understanding of, and familiarity with, American historical
 56 documents, public schools may display historically important excerpts from, or copies of,
 57 those documents in school classrooms and common areas as appropriate. Local boards of
 58 education and charter schools shall allow and may encourage any public school teacher or
 59 administrator to read or post in a public school building, classroom, or event excerpts or
 60 portions of writings, documents, records, or images that reflect the history of the United
 61 States, including, but not limited to:

62 (1) The Preamble to the Georgia Constitution;

- 63 (2) The Declaration of Independence;
 64 (3) The United States Constitution;
 65 (4) The Bill of Rights;
 66 (5) The Mayflower Compact;
 67 (6) The national motto;
 68 (7) The Pledge of Allegiance;
 69 (8) The National Anthem;
 70 (9) The writings, speeches, documents, and proclamations of the Founding Fathers and
 71 Presidents of the United States;
 72 (10) Decisions of the United States Supreme Court; and
 73 (11) Acts of the Congress of the United States, including the published text of the
 74 Congressional Record.
 75 (b) As historical documents, there shall be no content based censorship of American
 76 history and heritage documents referred to in this Code section due to their religious or
 77 cultural nature.

78 20-2-1022.

79 To increase student understanding of, and familiarity with, American historical documents
 80 and to provide curriculum support to classroom teachers of United States history, American
 81 government and civics, economics, and social studies, the Department of Education shall
 82 create an online instructional resource page or pages for teachers, which may include, but
 83 is not limited to, links to websites, foundational documents, and lesson plan ideas. At a
 84 minimum, such resource page or pages shall include the items in paragraphs (1) through
 85 (11) of subsection (a) of Code Section 20-2-1021 and shall focus on the foundational
 86 principles of limited constitutional government, federalism, religious liberty, freedom of
 87 speech, the right to private property, free enterprise, and the rule of law. In addition, the
 88 Department of Education shall create an online, age appropriate resource page or pages for
 89 students, which may include, but is not limited to, links to websites, foundational
 90 documents, videos, and student enrichment activities. At a minimum, such resource page
 91 or pages shall include the items in paragraphs (1) through (11) of subsection (a) of Code
 92 Section 20-2-1021 and shall focus on the foundational principles of limited constitutional
 93 government, federalism, religious liberty, freedom of speech, the right to private property,
 94 free enterprise, and the rule of law. To facilitate this process, the Department of Education
 95 shall, no later than November 1, 2013, provide the House Committee on Education and the
 96 Senate Education and Youth Committee with a proposed design of the web pages, along
 97 with a listing of the teacher and student resources and an estimated cost of implementation.

98 These website resources shall support the requirements specified in Code Section
99 20-2-1020."

100

SECTION 2.

101 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.