

Senate Bill 116

By: Senators Ligon, Jr. of the 3rd, Gooch of the 51st, Millar of the 40th, Shafer of the 48th,  
Cowsert of the 46th 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3 for the posting of historical documents; to require the Department of Education to develop  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 approximately three hours of  
17 appropriate instruction, as determined by each local school system, in each social studies  
18 class. The instruction shall include an age-appropriate 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. The religious references in the writings of the  
24 Founding Fathers shall not be censored. During Celebrate Freedom Week, a local school  
25 system shall suggest that students in grades three through 12 read at least one book during

26 the school year that focuses on the Founding Era, either the times and events or the people  
 27 who made significant contributions to independence or toward establishing the new federal  
 28 or state governments. In addition, a local school system shall require students in grades  
 29 three through 12 to recite at least one of the following three excerpts at least once during  
 30 the week, and local school systems are encouraged to require daily recitations from one or  
 31 all of these excerpts at the beginning 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 2015-2016 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. In order  
 84 to create shared digital resources available to all students in this state, such online resources  
 85 shall be integrated with the Teacher Resource Link of the Statewide Longitudinal Data  
 86 System. At a minimum, such resource page or pages shall include the items in paragraphs  
 87 (1) through (11) of subsection (a) of Code Section 20-2-1021 and shall focus on the  
 88 foundational principles of limited constitutional government, federalism, religious liberty,  
 89 freedom of speech, the right to private property, free enterprise, and the rule of law. There  
 90 shall be no content based censorship of American history, writings of the Founding Fathers,  
 91 or heritage documents referred to in this Code section due to their religious or cultural  
 92 nature. The online teacher resource page shall be completed and made easily available to  
 93 teachers no later than July 31, 2015. The online teacher resource page shall support the  
 94 requirements specified in Code Section 20-2-1020."

95 **SECTION 2.**

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