

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

**AS PASSED SENATE**

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3 for the posting of historical documents; to strongly encourage the Department of Education  
4 to develop online resources and instructional support; to provide for related matters; to repeal  
5 conflicting 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 it is strongly encouraged that the full week in September which includes Constitution Day,  
15 September 17, is recognized in public elementary, middle, and high schools in this state as  
16 Celebrate Freedom Week. It is strongly encouraged that Celebrate Freedom Week include  
17 approximately three hours of appropriate instruction, as determined by each local school  
18 system, in each social studies class. It is strongly encouraged that the instruction include  
19 an age-appropriate study of the intent, meaning, and importance of the Declaration of  
20 Independence and the United States Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, in their  
21 historical context including the background of the colonial era along with instruction about  
22 the Founding Fathers, such as the signers of the Declaration of Independence and the  
23 United States Constitution, the first six Presidents, and particularly George Washington.  
24 The religious references in the writings of the Founding Fathers shall not be censored.  
25 During Celebrate Freedom Week, it is strongly encouraged that local school systems

26 suggest that students in grades three through 12 read at least one book during the school  
 27 year that focuses on the Founding Era, either the times and events or the people who made  
 28 significant contributions to independence or toward establishing the new federal or state  
 29 governments. In addition, local school systems are strongly encouraged to require students  
 30 in grades three through 12 to recite at least one of the following three excerpts at least once  
 31 during the week, and local school systems are encouraged to require daily recitations from  
 32 one or all of these excerpts at the beginning of each school day:

33 (1) From the Declaration of Independence:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

54 (c) This Code section shall apply beginning with the 2016-2017 school year.

55 20-2-1021.

56 (a) To increase student understanding of, and familiarity with, American historical  
 57 documents, public schools may display historically important excerpts from, or copies of,  
 58 those documents in school classrooms and common areas as appropriate. Local boards of  
 59 education and charter schools are strongly encouraged to allow and may encourage any  
 60 public school teacher or administrator to read or post in a public school building,

61 classroom, or event excerpts or portions of writings, documents, records, or images that  
 62 reflect the history of the United States, including, but not limited to:

- 63 (1) The Preamble to the Georgia Constitution;  
 64 (2) The Declaration of Independence;  
 65 (3) The United States Constitution, with emphasis on the 13th, 14th, and 15th  
 66 Amendments;  
 67 (4) The Bill of Rights;  
 68 (5) The Mayflower Compact;  
 69 (6) The national motto;  
 70 (7) The Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag;  
 71 (7.1) The Pledge of Allegiance to the Georgia flag;  
 72 (8) The National Anthem;  
 73 (9) The writings, speeches, documents, and proclamations of the Founding Fathers and  
 74 Presidents of the United States;  
 75 (9.1) The Emancipation Proclamation;  
 76 (9.2) The Gettysburg Address;  
 77 (10) Decisions of the United States Supreme Court; and  
 78 (11) Acts of the Congress of the United States, including the published text of the  
 79 Congressional Record.

80 (b) As historical documents, there shall be no content based censorship of American  
 81 history and heritage documents referred to in this Code section due to their religious or  
 82 cultural nature.

83 20-2-1022.

84 To increase student understanding of, and familiarity with, American historical documents  
 85 and to provide curriculum support to classroom teachers of United States history, American  
 86 government and civics, economics, and social studies, the Department of Education is  
 87 strongly encouraged to create an online instructional resource page or pages for teachers,  
 88 which may include, but is not limited to, links to websites, foundational documents, and  
 89 lesson plan ideas. In order to create shared digital resources available to all students in this  
 90 state, such online resources may be integrated with the Teacher Resource Link of the  
 91 Statewide Longitudinal Data System. At a minimum, such resource page or pages may  
 92 include the items in paragraphs (1) through (11) of subsection (a) of Code Section  
 93 20-2-1021 and may focus on the foundational principles of limited constitutional  
 94 government, federalism, religious liberty, freedom of speech, the right to private property,  
 95 free enterprise, and the rule of law. There shall be no content based censorship of  
 96 American history, writings of the Founding Fathers, or heritage documents referred to in

97 this Code section due to their religious or cultural nature. It is strongly encouraged that the  
98 online teacher resource page be completed and made easily available to teachers no later  
99 than July 31, 2016, and support the requirements specified in Code Section 20-2-1020."

100

**SECTION 2.**

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