

The Senate Committee on Education and Youth offered the following substitute to SB 83:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To amend Part 2 of Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia  
2 Annotated, relating to competencies and core curriculum relative to quality basic education,  
3 so as to revise provisions relating to elective courses in History and Literature of the Old and  
4 New Testament Eras; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other  
5 purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

**SECTION 1.**

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8 Part 2 of Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,  
9 relating to competencies and core curriculum relative to quality basic education, is amended  
10 by revising Code Section 20-2-148, relating to elective courses in History and Literature of  
11 the Old and New Testament Eras, as follows:

12 "20-2-148.

13 (a)(1) All public schools with grade nine or above may make available to eligible students  
14 in grades nine through 12 an elective course in:

15 (A) In the History and Literature of the Old Testament Era and an elective course in;

16 (B) In the History and Literature of the New Testament Era;

17 (C) On the Hebrew Scriptures, Old Testament of the Bible;

18 (D) On the New Testament of the Bible; and

19 (E) On the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament of the Bible.

20 (2) The purpose of such courses shall be to accommodate the rights and desires of those  
21 teachers and students who wish to teach and study the Old and New Testaments and to  
22 familiarize students with the contents of the Old and New Testaments, the history  
23 recorded by the Old and New Testaments, the literary style and structure of the Old and  
24 New Testaments, the customs and cultures of the peoples and societies recorded in the  
25 Old and New Testaments, and the influence of the Old and New Testaments upon law,  
26 history, government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values, and culture;

27 (A) Teach students knowledge of biblical content, characters, poetry, and narratives  
 28 that are prerequisites to understanding contemporary society and culture, including  
 29 literature, art, music, mores, oratory, and public policy; and

30 (B) Familiarize students with, as applicable:

31 (i) The contents of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;

32 (ii) The history of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;

33 (iii) The literary style and structure of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament; and

34 (iv) The influence of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament on law, history,  
 35 government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values, and culture.

36 (3) A student shall not be required to use a specific translation as the sole text of the  
 37 Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament.

38 ~~(b)(1) No later than February 1, 2007, the~~ The State Board of Education shall adopt a  
 39 curriculum content standards for each course, including objectives; and reading materials;  
 40 ~~and lesson plans, which has been~~ are prepared in accordance with the requirements of this  
 41 subsection.

42 (2) The book or collection of books commonly known as the Old Testament shall be the  
 43 basic text for the course in the History and Literature of the Old Testament Era, and the  
 44 book or collection of books commonly known as the New Testament shall be the basic  
 45 text for the course in the History and Literature of the New Testament Era. In addition,  
 46 students may be assigned a range of reading materials for the courses, including  
 47 selections from secular historical and cultural works and selections from other religious  
 48 and cultural traditions. The content standards for the courses shall familiarize students  
 49 with the customs and cultures of the times and places referred to in the Old and New  
 50 Testaments. The content standards for the courses shall familiarize the students with the  
 51 methods and tools of writing at the times the Old and New Testament books were written,  
 52 the means by which they were preserved, the languages in which they were written and  
 53 into which they were translated, and the historical and cultural events which led to the  
 54 translation of the Old and New Testaments into the English language. The local board  
 55 of education may recommend which version of the Old or New Testament may be used  
 56 in the course; provided, however, that the teacher of the course shall not be required to  
 57 adopt that recommendation but may use the recommended version or another version.  
 58 No student shall be required to use one version as the sole text of the Old or New  
 59 Testament. If a student desires to use as the basic text a different version of the Old or  
 60 New Testament from that chosen by the local board of education or teacher, he or she  
 61 shall be permitted to do so.

62 (3) The courses provided for in this Code section shall:

- 63 (A) Be taught in an objective and nondevotional manner with no attempt made to  
64 indoctrinate students as to either the truth or falsity of the biblical materials or texts  
65 from other religious or cultural traditions;
- 66 (B) Not include teaching of religious doctrine or sectarian interpretation of the Bible  
67 or of texts from other religious or cultural traditions; and
- 68 (C) Not disparage or encourage a commitment to a set of religious beliefs.
- 69 (c) The provisions of this chapter relating to personnel employed by local units of  
70 administration, including without limitation certification requirements, employment, and  
71 supervision, shall apply to persons who teach the courses provided for in this Code section.  
72 In addition, no person shall be assigned to teach such courses based in whole or in part on  
73 any religious test, profession of faith or lack thereof, prior or present religious affiliation  
74 or lack of affiliation, or criteria involving particular beliefs or lack thereof about the Bible.  
75 Except for these requirements, the qualifications and training of teachers shall be  
76 determined by the local boards of education.
- 77 (d) On and after July 1, 2007, for the purpose of earning Carnegie unit curriculum credits  
78 at the high school level, satisfactory completion of ~~the course in the History and Literature~~  
79 ~~of the Old Testament Era shall be accepted by the State Board of Education for one-half~~  
80 ~~unit of elective credit, and satisfactory completion of the course in the History and~~  
81 ~~Literature of the New Testament Era~~ any of the courses described in subsection (a) of this  
82 Code section shall be accepted by the State Board of Education for one-half unit of elective  
83 credit; provided, however, that such courses are taught in strict compliance with the  
84 requirements of this Code section.
- 85 (e) A local board of education may make such arrangements for monitoring the content  
86 and teaching of ~~the course in the History and Literature of the Old Testament Era and the~~  
87 ~~course in the History and Literature of the New Testament Era~~ any of the courses described  
88 in subsection (a) of this Code section as it deems appropriate.
- 89 (f) Nothing in this Code section shall be construed to limit the authority of a local board  
90 of education to offer courses regarding the Old Testament or the New Testament that are  
91 not in compliance with this Code section; provided, however, that no state funds distributed  
92 pursuant to this article shall be expended in connection with such a course that does not  
93 meet the requirements of this Code section.
- 94 (g) Nothing in this Code section shall be construed to prohibit local boards of education  
95 from offering elective courses based upon the books of other religions or societies. In  
96 determining whether to offer such courses, the local board may consider various factors,  
97 including, but not limited to, student and parent demand for such courses and the impact  
98 such books have had upon history and culture.

99 (h) A course offered under this Code section shall follow applicable law and all federal  
100 and state guidelines in maintaining religious neutrality and accommodating the diverse  
101 religious views, traditions, and perspectives of students in the school. A course under this  
102 Code section shall not endorse, favor, or promote, or disfavor or show hostility toward, any  
103 particular religion or nonreligious faith or religious perspective. The State Board of  
104 Education, in complying with this Code section, shall not violate any provision of the  
105 United States Constitution or federal law, the Georgia Constitution or any state law, or any  
106 administrative regulations of the United States Department of Education or the Georgia  
107 Department of Education."

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**SECTION 2.**

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