

HB 267 -- ELECTIVE SOCIAL STUDIES COURSES

SPONSOR: Baker

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Special Committee on Student Accountability by a vote of 8 to 2. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 6 to 3.

This bill allows a school district to offer an elective social studies unit on the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament of the Bible, or the New Testament of the Bible. The course will include the contents, history, literary style and structure, and influences on society. No requirement shall be made by the district on the text translation students must use.

By July 1, 2018, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) must convene a work group to develop academic performance standards for this course and before January 1, 2020 have developed written curriculum frameworks for school districts to implement.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that adding Bible literacy courses will bolster education and make society a better place. Current trends in college indicate that students need Biblical literature as understood by American founders as alliterations that are referenced during that time were greatly influenced by the Bible, along with the impact on arts and philosophy in western civilization. Supporters also indicated that the influence of Bible literacy impacts modern society and sets us apart from the rest of the world, and that the Bible if used as an enrichment tool rather than an indoctrination is perfectly legal.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Baker; Alissa Johnson, Concerned Women for America Missouri; Charles Akers; Charles P. Stetson, Jr., Essentials on Education; Gina Allen; William Adkins, Essentials on Education; Keth Beutler; and Mary Byrne.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that the Bible is a source of spiritual faith and inherently religious and to strip it to the mere text and use it in a secular way demeans the scripture. Additionally, by choosing the Bible as a text it sets a faith apart and violates the separation of church and state doctrine. Finally, opponents indicated that it is the job of the family to teach Bible literacy, not the schools.

Testifying against the bill was Brian Kaylor.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that there is value of

academic study of the Bible for civic and cultural literacy.

Testifying on the bill was Justin Dyer.