

Louisiana requires Ten Commandments in classrooms

June 24, 2024

Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry signed into law a bill mandating the Ten Commandments be displayed in all of the state's public schools.

[The bill](#) requires every public elementary, secondary and postsecondary school in Louisiana to display a specifically Protestant version of the Ten Commandments in every classroom by 2025.

It also says public schools “may also display” the Ten Commandments along with the Mayflower Compact, the Declaration of Independence and the Northwest Ordinance.

“Including the Ten Commandments in the education of our children is part of our state and national history, culture and tradition,” the new law states.

The legislation states lawmakers' belief “the historic role of the Ten Commandments accords with our nation's history and faithfully reflects the understanding of the founders of our nation with respect to the necessity of civic morality to a functional self-government.”

The Louisiana law cites the U.S. Supreme Court's 5-4 ruling in [Van Orden v. Perry](#), which upheld the constitutionality of a Ten Commandments monument outside the Texas capitol.

The court's majority emphasized the historical significance of the Ten Commandments and stated that “simply having religious content or promoting a message consistent with a religious doctrine does not run afoul of the establishment clause.”

Patrick pledges to push similar bill in Texas

Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick promptly responded to Landry's signing of the Louisiana law by pledging to pass a similar bill in the Texas Senate once again during the 2025 legislative session.

"Texas WOULD have been and SHOULD have been the first state in the nation to put the 10 Commandments back in our schools. ... I will pass the 10 Commandments Bill again out of the Senate next session," [Patrick tweeted](#).

On a party-line vote last year, the [Texas Senate approved](#) a bill that would have required public schools in the state to post the Ten Commandments prominently in every classroom, but the measure [died in the Texas House](#).

On social media, Patrick blamed Texas Speaker of the House Dade Phelan, calling the inaction by the House "inexcusable and unacceptable."

Both the law approved in Louisiana and that was proposed last year in Texas dictates the wording of the Ten Commandments—a slightly abridged version of Exodus 20:2-17 from the King James Version of the Bible.

[Jews, Catholics and Protestants](#) number the commandments differently, and the way they are worded varies. In both the Louisiana and Texas bills, the mandated version followed the Protestant approach.

'Sad day for religious freedom'

Holly Hollman, general counsel and associate executive director of the [Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty](#), lamented the Louisiana action.



Holly Hollman

“It is a sad day for religious freedom when government officials in America take on the role of high priest, selecting favored Scripture passages and mandating their permanent display in public school classrooms,” Hollman said. “Families, not government authorities, are responsible for teaching and guiding children in religious matters.”

Mandating the display of Scripture in public schools is the “kind of government sponsorship of religion” that “weakens respect for government and religion,” Hollman said.

“While the U.S. Supreme Court has shifted its standards for interpreting the First Amendment and weakened the separation of church and state that has served our country well, this legislation appears designed to go even farther,” she said. “It tests our commitment to religious diversity and protection of religious freedom for all.”

[Americans United for Separation of Church and State](#) joined the American Civil Liberties Union and the Freedom from Religion Foundation in filing a lawsuit June 24 challenging the Louisiana law on behalf of a group of public school parents.

“Our lawsuit on behalf of Louisiana public school students and families will explain that this law is blatantly unconstitutional,” said Rachel K. Laser, president and CEO of Americans United.

“The law will result in religious coercion of public school students, who are

legally required to attend school and are a captive audience for school-sponsored religious messages.

“The law will also send a chilling message to students and families who do not subscribe to the state’s preferred version of the Ten Commandments that they do not belong equally in our public schools. Public schools must remain welcoming and safe for all of our children.”