

Classroom Ten Commandments bill dies in the House

May 24, 2023

A bill that would have mandated the display of the Ten Commandments in every Texas public school classroom failed to advance in the Texas House of Representatives.

The Texas House essentially killed the measure—roundly criticized by advocates of church-state separation—by not voting on it by the midnight May 23 deadline. A vote on SB 1515 would have advanced the bill for third and final passage.

Barring last-minute parliamentary maneuvers, the bill will not pass in this session of the Texas Legislature, which ends May 29.

In a party-line vote last month, the [Texas Senate approved the bill](#) by Sen. Phil King, R-Weatherford, requiring public schools in the state to post the Ten Commandments prominently in every classroom.

In a committee hearing, King said displaying the Ten Commandments acknowledges “the role that fundamental religious documents and principles had in American heritage and law.” He called the bill a way to “bring back this tradition of recognizing America’s religious heritage.”

His bill called for a “durable poster or framed copy of the Ten Commandments” measuring at least 16 inches wide and 20 inches tall to be displayed “in a conspicuous place” in every elementary and secondary classroom.

The bill stipulated the exact wording of the Ten Commandments—an abbreviated version of Exodus 20:2-17 from the King James Version of the

Bible. Jews, Catholics and Protestants number the commandments differently, and their wording varies.



Amanda Tyler

Amanda Tyler, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, [tweeted](#): “In a victory for religious freedom, the Texas Ten Commandments bill failed to pass the #txlege last night. I’m happy my home state rejected this attempt to advance #ChristianNationalism.”

Texas lawmakers did pass a bill that allows [public schools to employ chaplains](#). Unlike school counselors, the chaplains are not required to be certified by the State Board for Educator Certification.

The House successfully amended the bill to prohibit registered sex offenders from serving as chaplains and instituting background checks. The final version of the bill also requires chaplains to be endorsed by an endorsing body recognized by the U.S. Department of Defense, the Federal Bureau of Prisons or the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.