

# Families file suit over Ten Commandments displays

September 24, 2025

More than a dozen Texas families filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court on Sept. 22 seeking to stop their school districts from displaying a state-prescribed version of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms.

The suit maintains the mandated displays violate the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It further asserts the state's main interest in requiring the classroom Ten Commandments displays is "the imposition of religious beliefs and tenets on public-school children."

Plaintiffs in *Cribbs Ringer v. Comal Independent School District* are asking the court to declare the law mandating the Ten Commandments displays violates the Establishment Clause and Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment.

They also are seeking a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction that would require their districts to remove any classroom Ten Commandments displays and refrain from hanging new ones pending resolution of the suit.

In addition to Comal ISD, other school districts named in the suit are Georgetown, Conroe, Flour Bluff, Fort Worth, Arlington, McKinney, Frisco, Northwest, Azle, Rockwall, Lovejoy, Mansfield and McAllen.

"The displays will pressure students, including the minor-child Plaintiffs, into religious observance, veneration, and adoption of the state's favored religious scripture," the lawsuit states.

"The displays will also send the harmful and religiously divisive message

that students who do not subscribe to the Ten Commandments—or, more precisely, the specific version of the Ten Commandments that SB 10 requires—do not belong in their own school community, pressuring them to refrain from expressing any faith practices or beliefs that are not aligned with the state's religious preferences.”

## Earlier ruling affected 11 other districts

On Aug. 20, U.S. District Court Judge Fred Biery [issued a preliminary injunction](#) in *Rabbi Mara Nathan, et al, v. Alamo Heights Independent School District, et al*, blocking classroom Ten Commandments displays in 11 school districts.

Biery ruled SB 10, which took effect Sept. 1, violates both the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment and “crosses the line from exposure to coercion.”

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton appealed the ruling and filed a motion asking the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit to hear the case *en banc*—with all active judges of the court involved, rather than a three-judge panel.

“The Ten Commandments are a cornerstone of American law, and that fact simply cannot be erased by radical, anti-American groups trying to ignore our moral heritage,” [Paxton stated](#).

“There is no legal reason to stop Texas from honoring a core ethical foundation of our law, especially not a bogus claim about the ‘separation of church and state,’ which is a phrase found nowhere in the Constitution.”

# **State-approved version of the Ten Commandments**

SB 10—approved in the regular session of the Texas Legislature and [signed into law by Gov. Greg Abbott on June 21](#)—requires a donated poster or framed copy of the Ten Commandments at least 16 by 20 inches to be displayed in every Texas elementary and secondary school classroom.

At the time he signed the bill, [Abbott posted on social media](#): “Signed a law to put the Ten Commandments in Texas classrooms. Faith and freedom are the foundation of our nation. If anyone sues, we’ll win that battle. Just like when I defended the Ten Commandments Monument on Texas Capitol grounds at SCOTUS.”

The state-approved language of the Ten Commandments is an abridged version of Exodus 20:2-17 from the King James Version of the Bible.

Plaintiffs pointed out Jews, Catholics and Protestants number the commandments differently, and their wording varies. So, they asserted, the required language favors the Protestant approach as the state-sanctioned version.

The plaintiff families represent a variety of religious backgrounds—Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Baha'i, as well as humanist and nonreligious.

## **Families want to guide children's spiritual formation**

Plaintiff Kristin Klade stated: “As a devout Christian and a Lutheran pastor, the spiritual formation of my children is a privilege I take more seriously than anything else in my life. ... I address questions about God and faith

with great care, and I emphatically reject the notion that the state would do this for me.”

The families are represented by Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas, the American ACLU and the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

“Our Constitution’s guarantee of church-state separation means that families—not politicians—get to decide when and how public-school children engage with religion,” said Rachel Laser, president and CEO of Americans United.

“Multiple federal courts, including in Texas, have been clear: Ten Commandments displays in public schools violate students’ and families’ religious freedom. These displays must be removed.”



Charles Foster Johnson

Charles Foster Johnson, founding executive director of Pastors for Texas Children, voiced hope the courts will agree with the call to halt the mandated classroom Ten Commandments displays.

“Pastors for Texas Children is pleased that parents all over Texas are pushing back on these unjust laws that violate the God-given religious liberty of everyone,” Johnson said.

“All true faith is voluntary. It neither needs nor benefits from the endorsement of government. In fact, it suffers from it.

“This state needs to get back to the true conservatism that has fashioned the Texas spirit—limited government and local control that honors the ‘liberties and rights of the people,’ as the Texas Constitution so beautifully puts it.

“Just because current Texas politicians want to use religion to further consolidate their political power, doesn’t mean they can disregard God’s law and American law. God is not mocked by them. We pray the courts will shut this down quickly.”