

SB0268S01 compared with SB0268

~~{Omitted text}~~ shows text that was in SB0268 but was omitted in SB0268S01

inserted text shows text that was not in SB0268 but was inserted into SB0268S01

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Religious Curriculum in Schools
2026 GENERAL SESSION
STATE OF UTAH
Chief Sponsor: Todd Weiler
House Sponsor: Tiara Auxier



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3 **LONG TITLE**

4 **General Description:**

5 This bill amends education curricula requirements relating to religious liberty.

6 **Highlighted Provisions:**

7 This bill:

- 8 ▶ amends curricula requirements to address religious liberty;
- 9 ▶ amends requirements for higher education graduates; and
- 10 ▶ makes technical and conforming changes.

11 **Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

12 None

13 **Other Special Clauses:**

14 This bill provides a special effective date.

15 **Utah Code Sections Affected:**

16 AMENDS:

17 **53E-4-205.2** , as enacted by Laws of Utah 2025, Chapter 142

18 **53G-10-202** , as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, Chapter 380

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19 **53G-10-302** , as last amended by Laws of Utah 2024, Chapter 452

20 **53H-3-605** , as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2025, First Special Session, Chapter 8

22 ENACTS:

23 **53E-4-205.3** , Utah Code Annotated 1953

25 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

26 Section 1. Section **53E-4-205.2** is amended to read:

27 **53E-4-205.2. American constitutional government and citizenship course standards.**

29 (1) Beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, except as provided in Subsection (2)(e), { ~~§~~ } { ~~except~~
30 as provided in Subsection (2)(e), { } ← ~~§~~ } and as part of the social studies requirement established
31 under Section 53E-4-204, the state board shall require instruction on American constitutional
32 government and citizenship.

32 (2) In accordance with Subsections (3) and (4), the state board shall create standards for the course
33 required under Subsection (1) that:

34 (a) examine American founding principles, including:

35 (i) classical republicanism, natural rights, and colonial religious traditions; and

36 (ii) the text and principles of the Declaration of Independence and relationship to the United States
37 Constitution;

38 (b) examine the text of the United States Constitution, including:

39 (i) structure, powers, and limits of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches; and

40 (ii) the principles and operation of federalism and the state constitutional tradition;

41 (c) examine the development of the United States Constitution through amendments, including:

42 (i) the creation and application of the Bill of Rights;

43 (ii) the adoption and enforcement of the Civil War and Reconstruction Amendments; and

44 (iii) the adoption and enforcement of the [other]-voting rights amendments; [and]

45 (d) examine the practice of self-government at the state and local level, including:

46 (i) the Utah Constitution and local government, including counties, municipalities, and tribal
47 governments;

48 (ii) state and local elections, including the current candidate nomination and selection processes; and

49 (iii) the responsibilities of citizenship and participation in civil society[-] ; and

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(e) beginning no later than the 2027-2028 school year, examine the fundamental role of religion in United States history and the primacy of religious liberty to American constitutional government, including the optional topics described in Section 53E-4-205.3.

58 (3) { ~~beginning no later than the 2027-2028 school year,~~ } examine the { ~~fundamental~~ } role of religion in United States history and the primacy of religious liberty to American constitutional government, including the optional topics described in Section 53E-4-205.3.

57 (3) The course described in this section shall prioritize a close reading of the following primary source documents:

59 (a) the Mayflower Compact;

60 (b) the Declaration of Independence;

61 (c) the Iroquois Constitution;

62 (d) the United States Constitution;

63 (e) George Washington's Farewell Address;

64 (f) selected passages from the Federalist and Antifederalist Papers;

65 (g) the Articles of Confederation;

66 (h) speeches of Frederick Douglass;

67 (i) the Lincoln-Douglas Debates;

68 (j) speeches of Abraham Lincoln;

69 (k) the Seneca Falls Declaration;

70 (l) the Letter from Birmingham Jail;

71 (m) the Utah Constitution; and

72 (n) other essential documents from American constitutional history.

73 (4) The state board shall, in collaboration with the Civic Thought and Leadership Initiative within the Center for Constitutional Studies at Utah Valley University, develop standards that fulfill the requirements of this section.

77 Section 2. Section 2 is enacted to read:

78 **53E-4-205.3. Religious liberty instruction -- Optional topics.**

78 (1) In accordance with Section 53E-4-205.2, the state board standards for the course on American constitutional government and citizenship may instruct an educator that the educator may examine the fundamental role of religion on the following topics:

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- 81 (a) foundational documents and speeches in United States history, including the primary source
documents described in Subsection 53E-4-205.2(3);
- 83 (b) exploration and colonization of the Americas;
- 84 (c) early settlement of the North American colonies by religious refugees, including Puritans, Catholics,
Quakers, and Jews;
- 86 (d) education and literacy, including early colleges;
- 87 (e) concepts of the consent of the governed, including covenantal concepts in the Mayflower Compact
and early New England church and civil government;
- 89 (f) the American Revolution, including the influence of the First Great Awakening and of religious
sermons and pamphlets on liberty and tyranny;
- 91 (g) concepts of moral equality and natural rights, including in the Declaration of Independence and
other American declarations of rights;
- 93 (h) the debates in the Constitutional Convention and state ratifying conventions on the United States
Constitution, especially the First Amendment;
- 94 (i) the abolition of slavery in the United States;
- 95 (j) social welfare and reform movements, including:
- 96 (i) the temperance;
- 97 (ii) women's suffrage;
- 98 (iii) freedmen's aid;
- 99 (iv) child labor;
- 100 (v) immigrant aid; and
- 101 (vi) anti-lynching movements;
- 102 (k) United States opposition to totalitarianism, fascism, and communism;
- 103 ~~§~~ → { (f) United States support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; }
- 104 (l) { (f) { (m) } } { (f) { } ← § } United States reconstruction of former World War II enemies;
- 105 (m) { § → { } f } { (n) } { (m) { } ← § } the 1950s and 1960s nonviolent Civil Rights Movement; and
- 106 (n) { § → { } f } { (o) } { (n) { } ← § } religious pluralism in contemporary America.
- 107 (2) An LEA shall ensure that the topics enumerated in Subsection (1) are optional.
- 109 Section 3. Section **53G-10-202** is amended to read:
- 110 **53G-10-202. Maintaining constitutional freedom in the public schools.**
- 110 { ~~§~~ → { } { f } { (±) }

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- {(a)} ~~{An LEA may not provide }~~ Except as provided in this section and in Section 53G-10-206, any instructional activity, performance, or display which includes examination of or presentations about religion, political or religious ~~{instruction.}~~ thought or expression, or the influence thereof on music, art, literature, law, politics, history, or any other element of the curriculum, including the comparative study of religions{ }
- 111 ~~{(b)}~~ and the fundamental role of religion in the history of the United States and other countries{In }}, which is designed to achieve academic educational objectives included within the context of a course or activity and conducted in accordance with ~~{Subsection (1)(a), an LEA }~~ applicable rules or policies of the state and LEA governing boards, may ~~{teach about religion and promote }~~ be undertaken in the public schools.{ }
- 120 (2) ~~{ ← Æ } { Æ → } { } { }~~ ~~{religious liberty and respect }~~ No aspect of cultural heritage, political theory, moral theory, or societal value shall be included within or excluded from public school curricula for the ~~{religious views}~~ primary reason that it affirms, ignores, or ~~{lack thereof}~~ denies religious belief, ~~{of all}~~ religious doctrine, ~~{including:}~~ a religious sect, or the existence of a spiritual realm or supreme being.{ }
- 113 ~~{(i)}~~ (3) ~~{philosophical questions concerning religion;}~~ Public schools { }
- 114 ~~{(ii)}~~] A public school ~~{the history }~~ may not sponsor or deny the practice of ~~{religion;}~~ prayer or religious devotionals.{ }
- 115 ~~{(iii)}~~ (4) ~~{comparative religion;}~~ School officials and employees may not, regardless of a school, LEA, or state board rule or policy, { }
- 116 ~~{(iv)}~~] Notwithstanding any policy or state board rule, a school official or employee may not ~~{religious texts as literature; and}~~ use the official's or employee's position to endorse, promote, or disparage a particular religious, denominational, sectarian, agnostic, or atheistic belief or viewpoint.{ }
- 131 (5) An LEA shall ensure that:
- 132 (a) a student may express the student's beliefs about religion in homework, artwork, and other written or oral assignments free from discrimination based on the religious perspective of the student's submissions;
- 135 (b) home and classroom work is:
- 136 (i) not penalized or rewarded on the basis of religious perspective; and
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- 117 (ii) judged by ordinary academic standards of substance, relevance, and other legitimate pedagogical objectives; and
- 139 (c) notification of the constitutional freedoms described in this section is provided to school officials, employees, and students.
- 117 ~~{(v) the fundamental role of religion in the history of the United States} { } {and} { } { } { ←H } { H→ } { } { } { other countries } { . } { } { } { ←H }~~
- 118 ~~{(1) H→ (2)} (1) ←H { Except as provided in this section and in Section 53G-10-206, any instructional activity, performance, or display which includes examination of or presentations about religion, political or religious thought or expression, or the influence thereof on music, art, literature, law, politics, history, or any other element of the curriculum, including the comparative study of religions, which is designed to achieve academic educational objectives included within the context of a course or activity and conducted in accordance with applicable rules or policies of the state and LEA governing boards, may be undertaken in the public schools. }~~
- 126 ~~{(2) H→ (3)} (2) ←H { No aspect of cultural heritage, political theory, moral theory, or societal value shall be included within or excluded from public school curricula for the primary reason that it affirms, ignores, or denies religious belief, religious doctrine, a religious sect, or the existence of a spiritual realm or supreme being. }~~
- 130 ~~{(3) H→ (4)} (3) ←H { } { Public schools } { } { A public school } { may not sponsor or deny the practice of prayer or religious devotionals. }~~
- 132 ~~{(4) H→ (5)} (4) ←H { } { School officials and employees may not, regardless of a school, LEA, or state board rule or policy, } { } { Notwithstanding any policy or state board rule, a school official or employee may not } use the official's or employee's position to endorse, promote, or disparage a particular religious, denominational, sectarian, agnostic, or atheistic belief or viewpoint. }~~
- 137 ~~H→ [(6)] (5) ←H An LEA shall ensure that:~~
- 138 ~~{(a) a student may express the student's beliefs about religion in homework, artwork, and other written or oral assignments free from discrimination based on the religious perspective of the student's submissions; }~~
- 141 ~~{(b) home and classroom work is: }~~
- 142 ~~{(i) not penalized or rewarded on the basis of religious perspective; and }~~
- 143 ~~{(ii) judged by ordinary academic standards of substance, relevance, and other legitimate pedagogical objectives; and }~~

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145 {~~(e) notification of the constitutional freedoms described in this section is provided to school officials,~~
146 ~~employees, and students.~~}

141 Section 4. Section **53G-10-302** is amended to read:

142 **53G-10-302. Instruction in American history and government -- Study and posting of**
143 **American heritage documents.**

150 (1) As used in this section, "Ten Commandments" means the Decalogue, known as the Ten
151 Commandments, as recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures in Exodus 20:2-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21.

153 (2) The Legislature recognizes that a proper understanding of American history and government is
154 essential to good citizenship, and that the public schools are the primary public institutions charged
155 with responsibility for assisting children and youth in gaining that understanding.

157 (3)

(a) The state board and local school boards shall periodically review school curricula and activities to
ensure that effective instruction in American history and government is taking place in the public
schools.

160 (b) The boards shall solicit public input as part of the review process.

161 (c) Instruction in American history and government shall include a study of:

162 (i) forms of government, such as a republic, a pure democracy, a monarchy, and an oligarchy;

164 (ii) political philosophies and economic systems, such as socialism, individualism, and free market
capitalism; ~~and~~

166 (iii) ~~the~~ ~~↳~~ { } { ~~fundamental~~ } { } ~~←~~ ~~↳~~ } role of religion in United States history and the primacy of
religious liberty to American constitutional government; and

168 ~~[(iii)]~~ (iv) the United States' form of government, a compound constitutional republic.

169 (4) School curricula and activities shall include a thorough study of historical documents and principles
such as:

171 (a) the Declaration of Independence;

172 (b) the United States Constitution;

173 (c) the national motto;

174 (d) the pledge of allegiance;

175 (e) the national anthem;

176 (f) the Mayflower Compact;

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- (g) the writings, speeches, documents, and proclamations of the Founders and the Presidents of the United States;
- 179 (h) organic documents from the pre-Colonial, Colonial, Revolutionary, Federalist, and post[
] Federalist eras;
- 181 (i) United States Supreme Court decisions;
- 182 (j) the Ten Commandments;
- 183 (k) the Magna Carta;
- 184 (l) Acts of the United States Congress, including the published text of the Congressional Record; and
- 186 (m) United States treaties.
- 187 (5) To increase student understanding of, and familiarity with, American historical documents, public schools may display historically important excerpts from, or copies of, those documents in school classrooms and common areas as appropriate.
- 190 (6) There shall be no content-based censorship of American history and heritage documents referred to in this section due to their religious or cultural nature.
- 192 (7) Public schools shall display "In God we trust," which is declared in 36 U.S.C. 302 to be the national motto of the United States, in one or more prominent places within each school building.
- 189 Section 5. Section **53H-3-605** is amended to read:
- 190 **53H-3-605. Granting of degrees, diplomas, or certifications -- Board approval --**
- Termination of previous approval.**
- 198 (1)
- (a) An institution of higher education may not issue a degree, diploma, or certificate outside of the institution of higher education's primary role, as described in Section 53H-3-602, unless the institution of higher education receives approval from the board of the adequacy of the study for which the degree, diploma, or certificate is offered.
- 203 (b) A student shall demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the [~~history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States~~] following before receiving a bachelor's degree or teaching credential[-] :
- 206 (i) the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States; and
- 208 (ii) the { ~~fundamental~~ } role of religion in United States history and the primacy of religious liberty to American constitutional government.
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(2) Degrees, diplomas, and certificates issued [~~prior to~~] before the effective date of this section do not require board approval.

212 (3) The board may terminate the granting of previously approved degrees, diplomas, and certificates if
the degrees, diplomas, or certificates are inconsistent with the primary role prescribed by the board
for the affected institution of higher education.

209 Section 6. **Effective date.**

Effective Date.

This bill takes effect on July 4, 2026.

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