

CONCERNED
WOMEN *for* AMERICA
LEGISLATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE

March 24, 2021
House Judiciary Committee
Testimony in Support of SB 2308

Chairman Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee, I am Linda Thorson, State Director for Concerned Women for America of North Dakota, testifying for Concerned Women for America Legislative Action Committee. I am here today on behalf of our North Dakota members in support of SB 2308.

Concerned Women for America, the state's largest public policy woman's organization, has as its mission to protect and promote Biblical values and Constitutional principles through prayer, education, and advocacy. We strongly support the provisions in SB 2308; it meets our goal of providing quality education to a level of excellence in academic achievement. Enabling schools to post a copy of the Ten Commandments in their building and in a classroom and permitting students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance enhances a student's education and is beneficial to communities and the state.

I will address the portion of the bill allowing schools to post the Ten Commandments with immunity.

Summary of the Ten Commandments:

1. You shall have no other gods before God.
2. You shall not make or worship graven images.
3. You shall not take God's name in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness.
10. You shall not covet.

What is the value of enabling schools to post the 10 Commandments? John Witherspoon, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, said it best, "The Ten Commandments are the sum of the moral law."

Firstly, education is of little value unless virtue, truth, and integrity are included as part of the learning environment. Best practices in education involve enriching a child's academic skills during a critical time of development of right and wrong.

According to [leading educational researchers](#), learning environments play a significant role in student success. Enhanced learning environments include the setting and posting of goals as well as communicating high expectations.

Comprehensive character education is "the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue."¹ Students spend nearly 900 hours a year in school; schools must develop [respectful environments](#) where students learn core, ethical values. The posting of the universal values found in the Ten Commandments accomplishes the educational goal of establishing comprehensive character education by fostering ethical, responsible, and good character traits.

Secondly, subjects such as early American literature and Ancient literature are vehicles for the study of high character standards through ethically rich content. They include references to the Bible and universal values.

William Bradford's journal [Of Plymouth Plantation](#) is part of the early American literature curriculum in North Dakota's high schools. Bradford's journal, which describes the Virginia company's form of government, includes multiple references to an omnipresent God and signs of God in their daily life.

In early American literature classes, high school students also study Jonathan Edwards sermon, [Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God](#), which expounds on a Bible verse from Deuteronomy 32:35, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near, and their doom rushes upon them".

Early American literature also includes James Madison's essay, [The Federalist No. 10](#), a highly regarded American political writing about the ratification of the United States Constitution. Madison identifies the dispute over issues such as what religion or regime should be preferred.

High School Ancient literature students study [Odyssey](#), an ancient Greek poem of 24 books attributed to Homer. Students compare Odysseus, the Greek hero, and the parallels of Ithaca's story to the Biblical story of Moses, the Hebrew hero, and his God.

To those who object to the posting of the Ten Commandments in a public school, I ask, "Where will you stop? If you believe allowing a school to post the Ten Commandments is harmful to students, the community, and the state, are you going to censor early American literature, Ancient literature, and early American history curriculum and remove all references to the Bible?"

If so, the curriculum currently taught in North Dakota will look vastly different than it does today. Brian Stoker's 1897 gothic horror novel, [Dracula](#), and Harper Lee's [To Kill a Mocking Bird](#), both of which reference the Bible, must be removed as well as many other literature stories. Shakespeare's writings will have to be eliminated, as there are numerous religious allegories in

[Shakespeare's plays](#). Scholars like Professor [Naseeb Shaheen](#) identify three thousand places where Shakespeare used Biblical quotations in his writings.

Lastly, we should not prevent schools from posting the universal values which are posted in other public places. The [Ten Commandments are in our National Capitol](#). Outside of the U.S. Supreme Court building is Moses and the Ten Commandments. They are engraved on the two oak doors entering the Supreme Court Building and are posted inside the courtroom.

The Ten Commandments hang in our state-owned government building on the wall of the Peace Garden room in the North Dakota State Capitol.

Students should not be prohibited from the same environment the general public, judges, and lawgivers are granted. It defies logic to prohibit educational facilities from posting universal values already part of the curriculum and visible in other government-owned buildings. We fail students when moral absolutes are rejected and hidden from their environment.

Consider the importance James Madison, the fourth president, known as "The Father of Our Constitution," made of the Ten Commandments when you vote to support SB 2308,

"We have staked the whole of all our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government, upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God."

Please vote "Do Pass" on SB 2308.

¹ Lickona, Thomas (2004), Character matters: How to help our children develop good judgment, integrity, and other essential virtues. New York: Touchstone