

NEWS

Cleveland County school board wants Ten Commandments at schools

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Cleveland County's school board will decide if the Ten Commandments should be placed at all 30 schools in the district.

At the Dec. 14 meeting, the board agreed to have school administrators draft a policy to require the display of the Old Testament laws that Moses received from God after the Hebrew exodus of Egypt, according to the Bible.

The Ten Commandments represent a set of biblical principles relating to ethics and worship that play a fundamental role in Judaism and Christianity.

The school board would like to see the Ten Commandments placed "in a prominent place at or near the main entrance to all of our campuses," said school board member Ron Humphries, who introduced the resolution.

Such a display would be permitted under a law enacted in the early 2000s by the state legislature, Humphries said.

The law allows for school districts to place certain documents with "historical significance" to the United States, including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Mayflower Compact, national motto, pledge of allegiance, national anthem or preamble to the North Carolina Constitution. The law also makes exceptions for displays that "exemplify the development of the rule of law," such as the Magna Carta, the Mecklenburg Declaration, the Ten Commandments or The Justinian Code.

Under the law, any display of the Ten Commandments would need to be accompanied by one of the First Amendment.

Board member Dena Green said she would like to hear from an attorney before voting on such a policy.

"I would think that the ACLU would really come down on us," Green said. "We are probably going to get a lot of backlash on that, and it's going to cost us a lot of money."

Green said her concerns stem from the 1980 Stone vs. Graham decision, in which the Supreme Court ruled a Kentucky law which required the posting of the Ten Commandments on the wall of every classroom in the state. The law was deemed to have violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

When the law allowing the Ten Commandments to be placed at schools was passed over a decade ago, the ACLU did promise to sue any district or government body which attempted to display them.

Humphries said so long as the displays follow the law as written, the district shouldn't have any problems.

"We cannot be sued for following the law of the state of North Carolina," he said.

Federal courts have ruled that government or school sponsored religious activities violate the Constitution.

The Ten Commandments include the following admonitions and prohibitions:

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make idols.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

The board meets again on Monday, Jan. 11.