

ENGROSSED HOUSE
BILL NO. 1656

By: Rice, Kinnamon,
Steidley, Adair, Begley,
Kirby, Cox, Tyler,
Hager, Boyd (Betty),
Weese, Widener, Stites,
Reese, Erwin, Smith
(Dale), Wells, Adkins,
Davis, Ferguson, Gray,
Hastings, Hilliard,
Maddux, Mass, Perry,
Satterfield and Vaughn
of the House

and

Easley of the Senate

(schools - amending 70 O.S., Sections 1-111 and 11-101 -
sectarian or religious doctrine in public schools -
effective date - emergency)

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 70 O.S. 1991, Section 1-111, as
last amended by Section 68, Chapter 290, O.S.L. 1994 (70 O.S. Supp.
1994, Section 1-111), is amended to read as follows:

Section 1-111. A. A school day for any group of pupils shall
consist of not less than six (6) hours devoted to school activities,
except that a school day for nursery, early childhood education,
kindergarten, first grade, extended day program, and alternative
education programs shall be as otherwise defined by law or as
defined by the State Board of Education. Except for schools
operating under an extended day schedule as provided for in Section

1-109 of this title, not more than one (1) school day shall be counted for attendance purposes in any twenty-four-hour period. Pupils absent from school in which they are regularly enrolled may be considered as being in attendance if the reason for such absence is to participate in scheduled school activities under the direction and supervision of a regular member of the faculty.

B. Beginning with the 1995-96 school year, pupils absent from school in which they are regularly enrolled may be considered as being in attendance if the reason for such absence is to participate in courses off-campus which instruct in religion. The following conditions must be met for such pupil release to be authorized:

1. Pupils must have the written permission of their parents or guardians in order to be released;

2. Religious instruction must be off the public school premises;

3. The supervisor of such religious instruction must report monthly, to the public school principal, the names of the pupils who attended the religious instruction;

4. No school funds may be expended to finance the release-time religious instruction; and

5. No involvement of public school teachers or administrators shall be allowed in the release-time religious instruction.

The school board may deny the privilege of release-time religious instruction to pupils who absent themselves from such religious instruction after requesting the privilege. The school board also has the authority to determine the time periods to be allotted pupils for such release-time religious instruction. The Bible may be taught as history or literature in the public schools as part of the six-hour school day.

C. Beginning with the 1993-94 school year, the school day for kindergarten may consist of six (6) hours devoted to school activities.

SECTION 2. AMENDATORY 70 O.S. 1991, Section 11-101, is amended to read as follows:

Section 11-101. No sectarian or religious doctrine shall be taught or inculcated in any of the public schools of this state, but nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the reading of the Holy Scriptures or student-initiated voluntary school prayers which are nonsectarian and nonproselytizing in nature at school or school-related events.

SECTION 3. This act shall become effective July 1, 1995.

SECTION 4. It being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is hereby declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

Passed the House of Representatives the 13th day of March, 1995.

Speaker of the House of
Representatives

Passed the Senate the ____ day of _____, 1995.

President of the Senate