

1 **SENATE FLOOR VERSION**

February 24, 2015

2 **AS AMENDED**

3 SENATE BILL NO. 21

By: Allen of the Senate

4 and

5 Bennett et al of the House

6  
7  
8 **[ schools - Religious Viewpoints Antidiscrimination**  
9 **Act - Model Religious Viewpoints Antidiscrimination**  
10 **Policy - enforcement of act - codification -**  
11 **effective date--**

**emergency ]**

12  
13 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

14 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
15 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 27-201 of Title 70, unless there  
16 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

17 This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Religious  
18 Viewpoints Antidiscrimination Act".

19 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
20 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 27-202 of Title 70, unless there  
21 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

22 A school district shall treat the voluntary expression of a  
23 student of a religious viewpoint, if any, on an otherwise  
24 permissible subject in the same manner the district treats the

1 voluntary expression by a student of a secular or other viewpoint on  
2 an otherwise permissible subject and may not discriminate against  
3 the student based on a religious viewpoint, if any, expressed by the  
4 student on an otherwise permissible subject.

5 SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
6 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 27-203 of Title 70, unless there  
7 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

8 A. To ensure that the school district does not discriminate  
9 against a publicly stated voluntary expression of a religious  
10 viewpoint by a student, if any, and to eliminate any actual or  
11 perceived affirmative school sponsorship or attribution to the  
12 district of the expression of a religious viewpoint by a student, if  
13 any, a school district shall adopt a policy, which shall include the  
14 establishment of a limited public forum for student speakers at all  
15 school events at which a student is to publicly speak. The policy  
16 regarding the limited public forum shall also require the school  
17 district to:

18 1. Provide the forum in a manner that does not discriminate  
19 against the voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint by a  
20 student, if any, on an otherwise permissible subject;

21 2. Provide a method, based on neutral criteria, for the  
22 selection of student speakers at school events and graduation  
23 ceremonies;

1 3. Ensure that a student speaker does not engage in obscene  
2 speech, vulgar speech, offensively lewd speech, indecent speech or  
3 speech that promotes illegal drug use; and

4 4. State, in writing, orally or both, that the speech of a  
5 student does not reflect the endorsement, sponsorship, position or  
6 expression of the district.

7 B. The school district disclaimer required by paragraph 4 of  
8 subsection A of this section shall be provided at all graduation  
9 ceremonies. The school district shall also continue to provide the  
10 disclaimer at any other event in which a student speaks publicly for  
11 as long as a need exists to dispel confusion over the nonsponsorship  
12 of the school district of the speech of the student.

13 C. Student expression on an otherwise permissible subject may  
14 not be excluded from the limited public forum because the subject is  
15 expressed from a religious viewpoint.

16 SECTION 4. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
17 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 27-204 of Title 70, unless there  
18 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

19 Students may express their beliefs about religion in homework,  
20 artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from  
21 discrimination based on the religious content of their submissions.  
22 Homework and classroom assignments shall be judged by ordinary  
23 academic standards of substance and relevance and against other  
24 legitimate pedagogical concerns identified by the school district.

1 Students shall not be penalized or rewarded on account of the  
2 religious content of their work.

3 SECTION 5. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
4 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 27-205 of Title 70, unless there  
5 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

6 Students may organize prayer groups, religious clubs, "see you  
7 at the pole" gatherings or other religious gatherings before, during  
8 and after school to the same extent that students are permitted to  
9 organize other noncurricular student activities and groups.

10 Religious groups shall be given the same access to school facilities  
11 for assembling as is given to other noncurricular groups without  
12 discrimination based on the religious content of the student  
13 expression. If student groups that meet for nonreligious activities  
14 are permitted to advertise or announce meetings of the groups, the  
15 school district shall not discriminate against groups that meet for  
16 prayer or other religious speech. A school district may disclaim  
17 school sponsorship of noncurricular groups and events in a manner  
18 that neither favors nor disfavors groups that meet to engage in  
19 prayer or religious speech.

20 SECTION 6. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
21 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 27-206 of Title 70, unless there  
22 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

23 Each school district in the state shall adopt and implement the  
24 model policy. If a school district voluntarily adopts and follows

1 the model policy governing voluntary religious expression in public  
2 schools as provided by Section 7 of this act, the district shall be  
3 in compliance with the provisions of the Religious Viewpoints  
4 Antidiscrimination Act covered by the model policy.

5 SECTION 7. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
6 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 27-207 of Title 70, unless there  
7 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

8 This section sets forth the provisions of the Model Religious  
9 Viewpoints Antidiscrimination Policy. As used in the Religious  
10 Viewpoints Antidiscrimination Act, "model policy" means a local  
11 policy adopted by a school district that is substantially similar to  
12 the following:

13 ARTICLE I. STUDENT EXPRESSION OF RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINTS

14 The school district shall treat the voluntary expression by a  
15 student of a religious viewpoint, if any, on an otherwise  
16 permissible subject in the same manner the district treats the  
17 voluntary expression by a student of a secular or other viewpoint on  
18 an otherwise permissible subject and may not discriminate against  
19 the student based on a religious viewpoint, if any, expressed by the  
20 student on an otherwise permissible subject.

21 ARTICLE II. STUDENT SPEAKERS AT NONGRADUATION EVENTS

22 A. The state and its school districts believe there are  
23 numerous education benefits that students gain from public speaking.  
24 The school district hereby creates a limited public forum for

1 student speakers at all school events at which a student is to  
2 publicly speak, as designated herein. For each speaker, the  
3 district shall set a maximum time limit reasonable and appropriate  
4 to the occasion. Student speakers shall introduce:

5 1. Varsity football games played within the school district as  
6 well as those, if any, played at state and regional play-offs;

7 2. Opening announcements and greetings for the school day; and

8 3. Any additional school functions as designated by the school  
9 district, which may include, without limitation, assemblies, pep  
10 rallies, school programs open to the public and other athletic  
11 events in addition to football games.

12 B. The forum shall be limited in the manner provided by this  
13 article.

14 C. Only those students in the highest two grade levels of the  
15 school and who hold one of the following positions of honor based on  
16 neutral criteria are eligible to use the limited public forum:

17 1. President of the student council;

18 2. Class President of the senior class, or if the school does  
19 not have a senior class, then the class president of the highest  
20 grade level of the school; and

21 3. The captain or captains of the varsity football team.

22 D. The school district may, in its discretion, add to this list  
23 other students who are presidents of specific school organizations  
24

1 as the school district may designate. No student shall be compelled  
2 to accept a speaking position.

3 E. An eligible student shall be notified of the eligibility of  
4 the student, and a student who wishes to participate as an  
5 introducing speaker shall submit a request to the student council or  
6 other designated body during an announced period of not less than  
7 three (3) days. The announced period may be at the beginning of the  
8 school year, at the end of the preceding school year so student  
9 speakers are in place for the new year, or, if the selection process  
10 will be repeated each semester, at the beginning of each semester or  
11 at the end of the preceding semester so speakers are in place for  
12 the next semester. The names of the volunteering student speakers  
13 shall be randomly drawn until all names have been selected, and the  
14 names shall be listed in the order drawn. Each selected student  
15 will be matched chronologically to the event for which the student  
16 will be giving the introduction. Each student may speak for one (1)  
17 week at a time for all introductions of events that week, or rotate  
18 after each speaking event, or otherwise as determined by the  
19 district. The list of student speakers shall be chronologically  
20 repeated as needed, in the same order. The district may repeat the  
21 selection process each semester rather than once a year.

22 F. The subject of the student introductions shall be related to  
23 the purpose of the event and to the purpose of marking the opening  
24 of the event; honoring the occasion, the participants and those in

1 attendance; bringing the audience to order; and focusing the  
2 audience on the purpose of the event. The subject shall be  
3 designated; a student shall stay on the subject and the student may  
4 not engage in obscene speech, vulgar speech, offensively lewd  
5 speech, indecent speech or speech that promotes illegal drug use.  
6 The school district shall treat the voluntary expression of a  
7 religious viewpoint by the student, if any, on an otherwise  
8 permissible subject in the same manner the district treats the  
9 voluntary expression of a secular or other viewpoint by a student on  
10 an otherwise permissible subject and may not discriminate against  
11 the student based on a religious viewpoint expressed by the student  
12 on an otherwise permissible subject.

13 G. For as long as there is a need to dispel confusion over the  
14 nonsponsorship of the speech of a student at each event in which a  
15 student will deliver an introduction, a disclaimer shall be stated  
16 in written or oral form, or both, such as "The student giving the  
17 introduction for this event is a volunteering student selected on  
18 neutral criteria to introduce the event. The content of the  
19 introduction is the private expression of the student and does not  
20 reflect the endorsement, sponsorship, position or expression of the  
21 school district."

22 H. Certain students who have attained special positions of  
23 honor in the school have traditionally addressed school audiences  
24 from time to time as a tangential component of their achieved

1 positions of honor, such as the captains of various sports teams,  
2 student council officers, class officers, homecoming kings and  
3 queens, prom kings and queens, and the like, and have attained their  
4 positions based on neutral criteria. Nothing in this policy  
5 eliminates the continuation of the practice of having these  
6 students, irrespective of grade level, address school audiences in  
7 the normal course of their respective positions. Similarly, certain  
8 students who have attained special positions of honor within a  
9 school club or organization have addressed their members and guests  
10 at meetings, banquets and other events from time to time as a  
11 tangential component of their achieved position of honor within  
12 their school club or organization. Nothing in this policy  
13 eliminates the continuation of the practice of having those  
14 students, irrespective of grade level, address those audiences in  
15 the normal course of their respective positions at such school club  
16 or organizational meetings, banquets and events. The eligible  
17 speakers and selection process stated at the beginning of this  
18 policy will not apply to such meetings, banquets and events of such  
19 school clubs and organizations. The school district shall create a  
20 limited public forum for the speakers and shall treat the voluntary  
21 expression of a religious viewpoint by a student, if any, on an  
22 otherwise permissible subject in the same manner the district treats  
23 the voluntary expression of a secular or other viewpoint by a  
24 student on an otherwise permissible subject and may not discriminate

1 against the student based on a religious viewpoint, if any,  
2 expressed by the student on an otherwise permissible subject.

3 ARTICLE III. STUDENT SPEAKERS AT GRADUATION CEREMONIES

4 A. The school district hereby creates a limited public forum  
5 consisting of an opportunity for a student to speak to begin  
6 graduation ceremonies and another student to speak to end graduation  
7 ceremonies. For each speaker, the district shall set a maximum time  
8 limit reasonable and appropriate to the occasion.

9 B. The forum shall be limited in the manner provided by this  
10 article.

11 C. Only students who are graduating and who hold one of the  
12 following neutral criteria positions of honor shall be eligible to  
13 use the limited public forum:

14 1. President of the student council; and

15 2. Class President of the senior class, or if the school does  
16 not have a senior class, the class president of the highest grade  
17 level of the school.

18 D. The school district may, in its discretion, add to this list  
19 other students who are officers of the student council or class  
20 officers of the senior class, or if the school does not have a  
21 senior class, the class officers of the highest grade level of the  
22 school. A student who will otherwise have a speaking role in the  
23 graduation ceremonies is ineligible to give the opening and closing.  
24 The names of the eligible volunteering students will be randomly

1 drawn. The first name drawn will give the opening and the second  
2 name drawn will give the closing.

3 E. The topic of the opening and closing remarks shall be  
4 related to the purpose of the graduation ceremony and to the purpose  
5 of marking the opening and closing of the event; honoring the  
6 occasion, the participants and those in attendance; bringing the  
7 audience to order; and focusing the audience on the purpose of the  
8 event.

9 F. In addition to the students giving the opening and closing  
10 remarks, certain other students who have attained special positions  
11 of honor based on neutral criteria, including, without limitation,  
12 the valedictorian, will have speaking roles at graduation  
13 ceremonies. For each speaker, the school district shall set a  
14 maximum time limit reasonable and appropriate to the occasion and to  
15 the position held by the speaker. For this purpose, the district  
16 creates a limited public forum for these students to deliver the  
17 addresses. The subject of the addresses shall be related to the  
18 purpose of the graduation ceremony; marking and honoring the  
19 occasion; honoring the participants and those in attendance; and the  
20 perspective of the student on purpose, achievement, life, school,  
21 graduation and looking forward to the future.

22 G. The subject shall be designated for each student speaker.  
23 The student shall stay on the subject and the student may not engage  
24 in obscene speech, vulgar speech, offensively lewd speech, indecent

1 speech, or speech that promotes illegal drug use. The school  
2 district shall treat the voluntary expression of a religious  
3 viewpoint of a student, if any, on an otherwise permissible subject  
4 in the same manner the district treats the voluntary expression of a  
5 secular or other viewpoint by a student on an otherwise permissible  
6 subject and may not discriminate against the student based on a  
7 religious viewpoint, if any, expressed by the student on an  
8 otherwise permissible subject.

9 H. A written disclaimer shall be printed in the graduation  
10 program that states: "The students who will be speaking at the  
11 graduation ceremony were selected based on neutral criteria to  
12 deliver messages of the students' own choices. The content of the  
13 message of each student speaker is the private expression of the  
14 individual student and does not reflect any position or expression  
15 of the school district or the board of trustees, the administration  
16 of the district, employees of the district or the views of any other  
17 graduate. The contents of these messages were prepared by the  
18 student volunteers, and the district refrained from any interaction  
19 with student speakers regarding the viewpoints of the student  
20 speakers on permissible subjects."

#### 21 ARTICLE IV. RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

22 Students may express the beliefs of the student about religion  
23 in homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free  
24 from discrimination based on the religious content of the submission

1 by the student. Homework and classroom work shall be judged by  
2 ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance and against  
3 other legitimate pedagogical concerns identified by the school.  
4 Students shall not be penalized or rewarded on account of religious  
5 content. If the assignment of a teacher involves writing a poem,  
6 the work of a student who submits a poem in the form of a prayer,  
7 for example a psalm, should be judged on the basis of academic  
8 standards, including literary quality, and not penalized or rewarded  
9 on account of its religious content.

10 ARTICLE V. FREEDOM TO ORGANIZE RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES

11 Students may organize prayer groups, religious clubs, "see you  
12 at the pole" gatherings and other religious gatherings before,  
13 during, and after school to the same extent that students are  
14 permitted to organize other noncurricular student activities and  
15 groups. Religious groups shall be given the same access to school  
16 facilities for assembling as is given to other noncurricular groups,  
17 without discrimination based on the religious content of the  
18 expression of the group. If student groups that meet for  
19 nonreligious activities are permitted to advertise or announce the  
20 groups' meetings, for example, by advertising in a student  
21 newspaper, putting up posters, making announcements on a student  
22 activities bulletin board or public address system or handing out  
23 leaflets, school authorities shall not discriminate against groups  
24 that meet for prayer or other religious speech. School authorities

1 may disclaim sponsorship of noncurricular groups and events,  
2 provided they administer the disclaimer in a manner that does not  
3 favor or disfavor groups that meet to engage in prayer or other  
4 religious speech.

5 SECTION 8. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
6 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 27-208 of Title 70, unless there  
7 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

8 The Attorney General of the State of Oklahoma shall have the  
9 authority to enforce the provisions of the Religious Viewpoints  
10 Antidiscrimination Act and to seek all remedies provided by law.  
11 Additionally, a person injured by a violation of the act may bring a  
12 cause of action for civil relief against a governmental entity or a  
13 person, including an employee, servant or agent of a governmental  
14 entity, who violates the act. Remedies available in a civil suit  
15 include equitable relief and compensatory damages. A plaintiff who  
16 prevails in a cause of action under this section is entitled to  
17 costs, including reasonable attorney fees.

18 ~~SECTION 9. This act shall become effective July 1, 2015.~~

19 ~~SECTION 10. It being immediately necessary for the preservation~~  
20 ~~of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is hereby~~  
21 ~~declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and~~  
22 ~~be in full force from and after its passage and approval.~~

23 COMMITTEE REPORT BY: COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
24 February 24, 2015 - DO PASS AS AMENDED