
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 1989 Session of
1995

INTRODUCED BY GEORGE, HALUSKA, MELIO, BOSCOLA, TIGUE, HORSEY,
LaGROTTA, THOMAS, GAMBLE, STABACK, SHANER, GEIST, SCHRODER,
FAJT, READSHAW, MILLER, HESS, SATHER, ROBERTS, BISHOP,
ROBINSON AND MERRY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1995

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, SEPTEMBER 19, 1995

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), entitled "An
2 act relating to the public school system, including certain
3 provisions applicable as well to private and parochial
4 schools; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the
5 laws relating thereto," further providing for meditation and
6 prayer periods.

7 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
8 hereby enacts as follows:

9 Section 1. Section 1516.1 of the act of March 10, 1949
10 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, added
11 December 6, 1972 (P.L.1412, No.305), is amended to read:

12 Section 1516.1. Meditation and Prayer Periods.--(a) In each
13 public school classroom, the teacher in charge [may, or if so
14 authorized or directed by the board of school directors by which
15 he is employed,] shall, at the opening of school upon every
16 school day, conduct a brief period of silent prayer or
17 meditation with the participation of all the pupils therein
18 assembled.

19 (b) The silent prayer or meditation authorized by subsection

1 (a) of this section [is not intended to be, and shall not be
2 conducted as, a religious service or exercise, but] shall be
3 considered as an opportunity for silent prayer or meditation on
4 a religious theme by those who are so disposed, or a moment of
5 silent reflection on the anticipated activities of the day.

6 (c) Nonsectarian and nonproselytizing voluntary
7 benedictions, invocations or prayers which are initiated and
8 given by a student volunteer or student volunteers may be
9 permitted on public school property during school-related
10 noncompulsory student assemblies, school-related student
11 sporting events and school-related commencement ceremonies. Such
12 permission shall not be construed to indicate any support,
13 approval or sanction by the Commonwealth or any governmental
14 personnel or official of the contents of any such benedictions,
15 invocations or prayers or to be promotion or establishment of
16 any religion, religious belief or sect.

17 (d) No public school in this Commonwealth may implement the
18 provisions of subsections (a) and (c) until at such time the
19 electorate of the school district approves the conduct pursuant
20 to subsections (a) and (c). Upon receipt of a valid petition
21 bearing the signatures of five (5) per centum of the registered
22 voters within the school district, the governing body of a
23 county in which the school district is located shall direct the
24 county board of elections to submit to the qualified voters of
25 the school district a proposition to approve or disapprove the
26 provisions of subsections (a) and (c). The proposition may be
27 submitted at a primary, municipal or general election. The
28 petition must be received by the county board of elections at
29 least sixty (60) days before the election. If a majority of the
30 school district voters voting on the proposition favor the

provisions of subsections (a) and (c), the board of school
directors shall within forty-five (45) days adopt guidelines to
implement the provisions of subsections (a) and (c). If a
majority of the school district voters voting on the proposition
do not favor the provisions of subsections (a) and (c), those
provisions shall not be implemented in that school district.
After a referendum has failed, another referendum shall not be
held for a period of two (2) years from the election in which
the last referendum failed.

Section 2. This act shall take effect in 60 days.