

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 133 Session of
1993

INTRODUCED BY YEWCIC, LYNCH, WOZNIAK, BROWN, LaGROTTA AND
ROBERTS, JUNE 21, 1993

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON RULES, JUNE 21, 1993

A RESOLUTION

1 Declaring that public schools permit voluntary school prayer.

2 WHEREAS, Our First Amendment to the Constitution states

3 "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of

4 religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."; and

5 WHEREAS, Our Founding Fathers and the creators of the Bill of

6 Rights intended to forbid the government from establishing a

7 State religion. They did not intend to ban religion or religious

8 speech from public existence. Allowing school children to offer

9 voluntary prayers or allowing prayers at graduation ceremonies

10 or any school function is a protected expression of an

11 individual's right to free speech; and

12 WHEREAS, The United States Supreme Court let stand a decision

13 in which the Fifth United States Circuit Court of Appeals upheld

14 the constitutionality of a school district resolution permitting

15 high school seniors to include a student-led invocation in their

16 graduation ceremony if the majority of the class votes to do so

17 (Jones v. Clean Creek School District); and

1 WHEREAS, The decision by the court not to hear the Jones case
2 makes it clear that students do have the right to include prayer
3 at their graduation ceremonies. Prayer and religious speech can
4 be included at public high school graduation ceremonies as long
5 as it is student initiated and student led. A student's right to
6 free speech does not end at the graduation podium; and

7 WHEREAS, In a related case, Lamb's Chapel v. Center Moriches,
8 the United States Supreme Court overturned a Federal appeals
9 court ruling and upheld the constitutional right of Americans to
10 engage in religious free speech. Free speech is protected under
11 the Constitution and that includes religious free speech; and

12 WHEREAS, These court rulings reflect that government speech
13 endorsing religion is forbidden under the Establishment Clause
14 but that private speech endorsing religion is protected by the
15 Free Speech and Free Exercise Clause in the Bill of Rights;
16 therefore be it

17 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives declare that
18 public schools permit voluntary school prayer.