

**THE CIVICS ALLIANCE**  
**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS**  
**MODEL CIVICS LEGISLATION**

**DOCUMENT DISPLAY ACT**

**Introduction**

Many states make provision for the display of documents, including the National Motto, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States. We have incorporated elements of all categories of state statute pertaining to documents into our model Document Display legislation.

Our model Document Display legislation directs that schools *shall* display documents such as the national motto and the Declaration of Independence and *may* display documents such as the Mayflower Compact and the State Constitution.

**Rights to Use Historical Documents**

A related category of state statute provides teachers and students the *right* to use a wide variety of historical documents. We cover this aspect of historical documents in our model Historical Documents legislation.

**Religious Documents**

Several states make provision for the right to display historical documents that contain religious language. We believe these provisions are well-founded—as are their provisions to make clear that the display of such a document does not endorse a particular religion. We have also incorporated statutory language that specifies that the display of certain religious documents can only be funded voluntarily, not by the expenditure of taxpayer dollars.

**Model Legislative Text**

**SECTION A:**

The governing body of any school district or public charter school shall display in each classroom, assembly hall, and cafeteria a durable poster or framed picture at least eleven (11) inches in height by seventeen (17) inches in width of the national motto, “In God We Trust”. The

dimensions of the national motto shall be at least four (4) inches in height by fifteen (15) inches in width. The durable poster or framed picture shall contain no words other than the motto and language identifying the motto as the motto of the United States of America.

#### **SECTION B:**

The governing body of any school district or public charter school shall display in each classroom, assembly hall, and cafeteria a durable poster or framed picture at least eleven (11) inches in height by seventeen (17) inches in width of the words of the Great Seal of the United States, “E Pluribus Unum”. The dimensions of the words of the Great Seal shall be at least four (4) inches in height by fifteen (15) inches in width. The durable poster or framed picture shall contain no words other than the words of the Great Seal and language identifying the words as the Great Seal of the United States.

#### **SECTION C:**

The governing body of any school district or public charter school shall display in each classroom, assembly hall, and cafeteria a durable poster or framed picture at least eleven (11) inches in height by seventeen (17) inches in width of the [name of state] motto, “[words of state motto]”. The dimensions of the motto of [name of state] shall be at least four (4) inches in height by fifteen (15) inches in width. The durable poster or framed picture shall contain no words other than the motto and language identifying the words as the motto of [name of state].

#### **SECTION D:**

The governing body of any school district or public charter school shall require all students to take a program of instruction in the meaning and history of the national motto, the words of the Great Seal of the United States, and the motto of [name of state].

#### **SECTION E:**

The governing body of any school district or public charter school shall display in each classroom copies of the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the Gettysburg Address.

#### **SECTION F:**

(1) The governing body of any school district or public charter school may display in each classroom copies of Magna Carta, the Mayflower Compact, the English Bill of Rights, the Constitution of the United States, the Emancipation Proclamation, the national anthem, the Constitution of [name of state], the [name of state] anthem, the writings, speeches, documents, and proclamations of the founding fathers and presidents of the United States, United States Supreme Court decisions, acts of the United States Congress including the published text of the Congressional Record, and other documents the governing body deems significant to the history of [name of state] and the United States.

(2) The historical documents whose display this section authorizes may include religious quotations, references, or illustrations; provided, however, that no display seeks to establish or promote religion or to persuade any person to embrace a particular religion, denomination of a religion, or other philosophy.

(3) The display of a document containing words associated with a religion shall be in the same manner and appearance generally as other documents and objects displayed and shall not be presented or displayed in any fashion that results in calling attention to it apart from the other displayed documents and objects.

(4) The display of a document containing words associated with a religion shall be accompanied by a prominent sign quoting the First Amendment of the United States Constitution as follows: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

#### **SECTION G:**

The governing body of any school district or public charter school shall expend a reasonable sum from its funds for the purchase of all displayed items mandated or permitted in Sections A, B, C, E, and F. All displayed items purchased shall be manufactured in the United States. The governing body shall renew such displayed items when necessary.

#### **SECTION H:**

(1) The governing body of any school district or public charter school may display in each classroom a durable poster or framed picture at least eleven (11) inches in height by seventeen (17) inches in width of the Ten Commandments.

(2) In small print below the last commandment shall appear a notation concerning the purpose of the display, as follows: "The secular application of the Ten Commandments is clearly seen in its adoption as the fundamental legal code of Western Civilization and the Common Law of the United States."

(3) The copies required by this section shall be purchased with funds made available through voluntary contributions made for the purposes of this section.

#### **SECTION I:**

If any provision of this chapter, or the application of any provision to any person or circumstance, is held to be invalid, the remainder of this chapter and the application of its provisions to any other person or circumstance shall not be affected thereby.

### **Existing State Statutes**

*Motto: National: Display*

Georgia: [O.C.G.A. § 50-3-4.1](#) [*School superintendents and administrative officials authorized to display copies of national motto and American and Georgia flags in certain places; means of acquisition*]

Indiana: [IC 20-30-3-5](#) [*National motto*]

Kentucky: [KRS § 158.195](#) [*Display of national motto in public elementary and secondary schools – Reading and posting in public schools of texts and documents on American history and heritage*]

Louisiana: [La. R.S. 17:262](#) [*Flag and patriotic customs of the United States; required instruction*]

Mississippi: [Miss. Code Ann. § 37-13-163](#) [*Posting or reading of historical documents with religious references; display of motto “In God We Trust.”*]

North Dakota: [N.D. Cent. Code § 15.1-06-17.2](#) [*National motto - Display in schools*]

Ohio: [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §3313.801](#) [*Display of national and Ohio mottoes*]

Oklahoma: [Okla. Stat. tit. 70, § 24-106.1](#) [*Classroom display – Motto of the United States of America – Classroom use of founding documents*]

Tennessee: [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-2502](#) [*“In God We Trust” national motto to be displayed in prominent school location*]

Texas: [Texas Education Code §1.004](#) [*Display of National Motto*]

*Motto: National: Instruction*

Lousiana: [La. R.S. 17:262](#) [*Flag and patriotic customs of the United States; required instruction*]

*Motto: State: Display*

Ohio: [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §3313.801](#) [*Display of national and Ohio mottoes*]

*Motto: For God and Country: Display*

Massachusetts: [Ma. Gen. Laws, Ch. 71, §69A](#) [*Plaque reading ‘For God and Country’; placement on public school buildings*]

#### *National Anthem: Display*

Kentucky: [KRS § 158.195](#) [*Display of national motto in public elementary and secondary schools – Reading and posting in public schools of texts and documents on American history and heritage*]

#### *Historical Documents: Acquisition*

Arizona: [A.R.S. § 15-506](#) [*Flag, Constitution and the Bill of Rights display; recitation of the pledge of allegiance; exemption*]

New Hampshire: [NH RSA §189:22](#) [*Copies of State Constitution and Election Laws to be Furnished*]

#### *Historical Documents: Distribution*

New Hampshire: [NH RSA §189:23](#) [*Distribution*]

#### *Historical Documents: Display*

Arizona: [A.R.S. § 15-506](#) [*Flag, Constitution and the Bill of Rights display; recitation of the pledge of allegiance; exemption*]

Kentucky: [KRS § 158.175](#) [*Recitation of Lord’s prayer and pledge of allegiance – Instruction in proper respect for and display of the flag – Observation of moment of silence or reflection*]; [KRS § 158.195](#) [*Display of national motto in public elementary and secondary schools – Reading and posting in public schools of texts and documents on American history and heritage*]

Mississippi: [Miss. Code Ann. § 37-13-163](#) [*Posting or reading of historical documents with religious references; display of motto “In God We Trust.”*]

North Carolina: [N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-47](#) [*Powers and duties generally*]

Oklahoma: [Okla. Stat. tit. 70, § 24-106.1](#) [*Classroom display – Motto of the United States of America – Classroom use of founding documents*]

*Historical Documents: Religious: Display*

North Dakota: [N.D. Cent. Code § 15.1-06-17.1](#) [*Religious objects or documents – Display*]

*Ten Commandments: Display*

Kentucky: [KRS § 158.178](#) [*Ten Commandments to be displayed*]

South Dakota: [SDCL 13-24-17.1](#) [*Display of Ten Commandments permitted—Conditions*]