

Testimony on HB 1145
January 14, 2024
Daniel Rice (Fargo, ND)

Chairman Klemin and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am a person of faith and regular churchgoer and I write in opposition to HB 1145 which mandates that the ten commandments be posted in all public classrooms in North Dakota. I oppose the bill for the following reasons.

1. The ten commandments are entirely and exclusively a religious statement. The version quoted in the bill is from the King James version of the Christian Bible and originated in the Torah of Judaism. To claim it is a neutral historical document is false and should offend all followers of Judaism and Christianity.
2. To claim that the ten commandments is the sole or primary source of U.S. civil law is historically false. U.S. law was influenced by British Common Law and the development of case law in Britian. British law was influenced by other legal traditions in Europe, especially Roman Law. The development of U.S. law is complex and somewhat unique to this country and the claim that it is dependent on the ten commandments is a myth promoted by evangelical Christians, Christian nationalists and others with a religious agenda.
3. The tenants of the ten commandments are included in several other legal traditions that preceded the ten commandments and, in fact, many scholars believe that those ancient traditions influenced the formation of the ten commandments.

Which raises the question of the intent of the sponsors of this bill. One answer is that they are, as is often the case, simply copying the bills from other “red state” legislators who have proposed similar bills.

Which leads to the conclusion that this bill is intended to impose a particular religious view on all the students, teachers, and staff in the public schools, colleges and universities in the state.

For all of these reasons, if you value religious freedom, historical truth, and sound educational practice I urge you to oppose this bill.

Thank you for reading my testimony and **I urge the Judiciary Committee to vote Do Not Pass on HB 1145.**