

Sylvia Bull

Regarding House Bill No. 1145

13 January 2025

To the members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I urge a strong NO vote on this bill requiring the displaying of the Ten Commandments in public educational settings. As a Christian, and a local pastor in Bismarck, the Ten Commandments are an important component of my religious belief and practice. However, there are many other residents of North Dakota who practice other religions (or none!) and who have other texts, traditions, and values that are important to them. By privileging Christian religious texts in the classroom, the State would be infringing on their right to free exercise of their religion and beliefs. This is wrong.

Secondarily, public teachers are not trained and should not be expected to answer questions from students about these commandments, which may naturally arise. That is the purview of families, pastors, and faith communities. The State would infringe on our rights to teach and share our beliefs in appropriate ways by presuming to take on this role. This is also wrong.

In Daniel chapter 3, the Bible shows the dangers of the State enforcing religious beliefs and practices on minorities. In that story, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did what all people of conviction and integrity are called to do in such a situation, they stood up to the State and said, "No. No, you cannot and will not dictate my faith to me."

As a person of faith, I say no, too. And I encourage you to say no with me. Say no to this overreach that violates the rights and free conscience of our neighbors. We can and must do better as North Dakotans.

Again, I urge you to vote NO on House Bill 1145. Please direct your efforts to legislation that serves and benefits the lives of all North Dakotans, irrespective of faith tradition or belief.

In Christ,
Rev. Sylvia Bull
Bismarck