

House Industry, Business, & Labor Committee

House Bill 1145

Andrew Alexis Varvel

Written Testimony

North Dakota State Capitol

Room 327B

Tuesday

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10:00AM

Chairman Klemin and Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrew Alexis Varvel. I live in Bismarck, District 47.

“Do to others what you would have them do to you.”

– Jesus Christ, from Matthew 7:12, New International Version

This is often called the Golden Rule. This precept can be found in many religions, not only Christianity. And, according to Jesus Christ, this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:12) If one were truly serious about teaching the essence of Christianity to children, look at the Golden Rule.

Instead, House Bill 1145 proposes to impose one particular translation of The Ten Commandments onto every public classroom in North Dakota. Different denominations use different wordings in the English language. And that doesn't even get into the question of mandating that the exact wording of The Ten Commandments must be in English – which means it can't be in the original Hebrew, or Greek, Aramaic, Latin, German, Lakota, or Mandan.

I think the main reason why America is so much more religious than other industrialized countries is precisely because we don't have a state religion.

Atheism tends to become more popular where there is a state religion.

Imagine if every wall in every public school were wallpapered with The Ten Commandments, to the point where they would be absolutely everywhere.

Consider what would happen if The Ten Commandments became a motif like an Andy Warhol painting of Campbell's Soup Cans, or Marilyn Monroe.

The likely result would be for children to ignore it. At heart, this would profane what is sacred. This is precisely what Jesus Christ warned against.

Please look up Matthew 7:6 on this subject.

Putting up The Ten Commandments in every classroom in the state would accomplish one thing – marking territory with sectarian symbolism. If this is what you want, don't get surprised if a devout Muslim waging nonviolent jihad to proselytize Islam would ask for equal space to post the Shahada. Or if a mischief maker insists on posting the erotic hymn “Ishtar Will Not Tire”...

Do unto others what you would have them do unto you.

Other people are arguing that House Bill 1145 is unconstitutional. Other people are arguing that it is divisive. And coercive. And micromanagement. It is all of these things, but above all I consider this legislation to be unwise.

If you think that posting The Ten Commandments in every classroom will make America a Christian nation, I think you are sadly mistaken. For it is not the posting of paper in classrooms that will change hearts, but rather our own examples of how we treat those who are less fortunate than ourselves.

Let's give unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and give unto God what is God's.

Please give House Bill 1145 a **DO NOT PASS** recommendation.

Thank you.

*“The more you look
at the same exact
thing, the more the
meaning goes away,
and the better and
emptier you feel.”*

– Andy Warhol

source: Museum of Modern Art

<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/61240>