

By: Nunnelee

To: Education

SENATE BILL NO. 2784

1 AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE AND DIRECT PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS IN  
2 PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS TO CONDUCT A DAILY ORAL  
3 RECITATION OF AN EXCERPT FROM THE "DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE";  
4 AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

6 SECTION 1. Principals and teachers in each public elementary  
7 and secondary school of each school district in this state shall  
8 conduct, before the opening exercises of each school day, an oral  
9 recitation of the following excerpt from the "Declaration of  
10 Independence":

11 We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men  
12 are created equal, that they are endowed by their  
13 Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among  
14 these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.  
15 That to secure these rights, governments are instituted  
16 among men, deriving their just powers from the consent  
17 of the governed....

18 In addition to the recitation required by this section, every  
19 school shall provide that, from time to time, an explanation of these  
20 words from the Declaration of Independence be given to students. The  
21 explanation shall include in a manner appropriate to the grade level of  
22 the students:

23 (a) A discussion of the nature of absolute monarchy, and the  
24 means by which this concept was challenged by the language of the  
25 Declaration;

26 (b) The origins of the idea of individual liberty and  
27 natural law and the impact upon American government of the ideas of the

28 eighteenth century Enlightenment;

29           (c) The role that the fundamental principles set forth in  
30 the Declaration played in the movement to abolish slavery in the United  
31 States;

32           (d) The role that the fundamental principles set forth in  
33 the Declaration played in the women's suffrage movement;

34           (e) The role that the fundamental principles set forth in  
35 the Declaration have played in our system of justice;

36           (f) The embodiment of these ideals in the Bill of Rights;  
37 and

38           (g) That the terms "mankind" and "men" are used in an  
39 eighteenth century context, having been used from the fourteenth  
40 century to Jefferson's time to mean "human species" and "humans," and  
41 are not to be read literally as restricting the language of the  
42 Declaration to apply only to the male gender.

43           SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from  
44 and after July 1, 2000.