

By: Senator(s) Nunnelee

To: Education

SENATE BILL NO. 2164

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,  
19 every school shall provide that, from time to time, an  
20 explanation of these words from the Declaration of  
21 Independence be given to students. The explanation shall  
22 include in a manner appropriate to the grade level of the  
23 students:

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



27                   (b) The origins of the idea of individual liberty  
28 and natural law and the impact upon American government of  
29 the ideas of the Eighteenth-Century Enlightenment;

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

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

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

39                   (f) The embodiment of these ideals in the Bill of  
40 Rights; and

41                   (g) That the terms "mankind" and "men" are used in  
42 an Eighteenth-Century context, having been used from the  
43 Fourteenth Century to Jefferson's time to mean "human  
44 species" and "humans," and are not to be read literally as  
45 restricting the language of the Declaration to apply only to  
46 the male gender.

47           **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
48 and after July 1, 2002.

