

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2020 REGULAR SESSION

Committee Substitute

for

Committee Substitute

for

Senate Bill 38

SENATORS AZINGER, CLINE, AND MAYNARD, *original*

sponsors

[Originating in the Committee on the Judiciary;

reported on February 20, 2020]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section,
2 designated §18-2-9a, relating to allowing county boards of education to offer students in
3 grade nine or above an elective social studies course on sacred texts or comparative world
4 religions; permitting a student to use a translation of his or her choice; requiring county
5 board of education to submit to the West Virginia Department of Education the course
6 standards, including the teacher qualifications and required professional development;
7 and imposing requirements applicable to the course, the county board of education, and
8 the State Board of Education.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 2. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

§18-2-9a. Elective courses of instruction on sacred texts or comparative religions.

1 (a) County boards of education may offer to students in grade nine or above an elective
2 social studies course on sacred texts or comparative world religions.

3 (b)The purpose of the elective courses authorized by the provisions of subsection (a) of
4 this section is:

5 (1) To educate students as to the contents of the texts in an objective, academic manner
6 which neither promotes nor disparages any religion;

7 (2) To educate students as to literary forms and symbols in the texts which are referred to
8 in art, music, and literature; and

9 (3) To educate students as to the influence of the texts on history, philosophy, law, and
10 culture.

11 (c) A student electing to take a course authorized by the provisions of subsection (a) of
12 this section shall not be required to use a specific translation or version of the particular subject
13 matter of the course.

14 (d) A county board of education electing to allow a course authorized by this section shall
15 submit to the West Virginia Department of Education the course standards for any elective to be

16 offered pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, including the teacher qualifications and required
17 professional development.

18 (e) A course offered under this section shall follow applicable law and all federal and state
19 guidelines in maintaining religious neutrality and accommodating the diverse religious views,
20 traditions, and perspectives of students in the school. A course under this section may not
21 endorse, favor, promote, disfavor, or show hostility toward any particular religion or nonreligious
22 faith or religious perspective. Any county board offering a course under this section shall not
23 violate any provision of the United States Constitution or federal law, the West Virginia
24 Constitution or any state law, any administrative regulations of the United States Department of
25 Education, or any rule of the state board. The state board shall provide guidance to the county
26 boards on complying with the requirements of this subsection.