

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Subject: Ensuring the Access of Educators and Students to Historical Documents with Religious Content

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Overview

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution says that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . . ." These "religion clauses" prohibit government from establishing a religion and protect people's right to practice their religion or not practice without government interference.

Section

- 1 **American heritage education.** (a) Directs school districts to adopt a policy for grade level instruction to enable students to read and study documents relevant to America's founders, including documents that contributed to the representative republican form of limited government, the Bill of Rights, the free-market economic system and patriotism. Requires districts to permit principals and teachers to use, read or post in a public school building or classroom national or state documents, writings, speeches, proclamations, such as the:
- (1) Mayflower Compact;
 - (2) Declaration of Independence;
 - (3) U.S. and Minnesota Constitutions;
 - (4) Northwest Ordinance of 1787;
 - (5) original Pledge of Allegiance and national anthem;
 - (6) various specified writings; and
 - (7) records of Congress and U.S. Supreme Court decisions.
- (b) Precludes school districts from prohibiting the use of documents under paragraph (a) based on religious references. Requires the documents to be used for educational purposes and not religious indoctrination.
- (c) Allows students to voluntarily choose to study a religious topic if other students have the

same opportunity to freely choose a topic.

This section is effective immediately.

- 2 **Title.** Titles this section the American heritage education in Minnesota public schools act.

This section is effective immediately.

- 3 **Learning area seven social studies rule repeal.** Repeals the profile of learning specifications for high school content standards in social studies.

This section is immediately effective.