

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. _____

Designating the week of October 1, 2023, through October 7, 2023, as “Religious Education Week” to celebrate religious education in the United States.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. GRAHAM (for himself, Mr. BARRASSO, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. COTTON, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. DAINES, Mr. HAGERTY, Mr. HAWLEY, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. LANKFORD, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. RISCH, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Mr. TUBERVILLE, and Mr. WICKER) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Designating the week of October 1, 2023, through October 7, 2023, as “Religious Education Week” to celebrate religious education in the United States.

Whereas the free exercise of religion is an inherent, fundamental, and inalienable right protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States;

Whereas the United States has long recognized that the free exercise of religion is important to the intellectual, ethical, moral, and civic development of individuals in the United States, as evidenced by the Founders of the United States, such as—

(1) Benjamin Franklin, who believed religion to be “uniquely capable of educating a citizenry for democracy”; and

(2) George Washington, who said in his farewell address, “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.”;

Whereas religious education is useful for self-development because it asks students to consider and respond to questions concerning the meaning and purpose of life, engages students in questions about morality and justice, and enables students to identify their values;

Whereas studies like the one published by the International Journal of Mental Health Systems in 2019 have shown that religious education can be “instrumental to improving adolescent mental health” by helping children learn how to make decisions based on morals, promoting less risky choices, and encouraging connectedness within a community, which can enhance self-esteem and well-being;

Whereas religious education fosters respect for other religious groups and individuals generally by acknowledging a source for human dignity and worth;

Whereas the Supreme Court of the United States found in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925), that the State does not have power “to standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only. The child is not the mere creature of the state; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations.”;

Whereas religious instruction can come from a variety of sources, including sectarian schools and released time programs;

Whereas, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2015, 4,350,000 children in the United States attended sectarian elementary and secondary schools where those children received religious education; and

Whereas the Supreme Court of the United States held in *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306 (1952), that State statutes providing for the release of public school students from school to attend religious classes are constitutional, and, as a result, an estimated 540,000 public school students in the United States take advantage of released time programs each year: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) affirms the importance of religious edu-
3 cation in the civic and moral development of the peo-
4 ple of the United States;

5 (2) celebrates the schools and organizations
6 that are engaged in religious instruction of the chil-
7 dren of the United States to aid those children in in-
8 tellectual, ethical, moral, and civic development;

9 (3) calls on each of the 50 States, each terri-
10 tory of the United States, and the District of Colum-
11 bia to accommodate individuals who wish to be re-
12 leased from public school attendance to attend reli-
13 gious classes; and

1 (4) designates the week of October 1, 2023,
2 through October 7, 2023, as “Religious Education
3 Week”.