

**SUBJECT:** Disallowing prohibitions on national motto displays in classrooms

**COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 13 ayes — Buckley, Allen, Allison, Cunningham, Dutton, Cody Harris, Harrison, Hefner, Hinojosa, K. King, Longoria, Schaefer, Talarico

0 nays

**WITNESSES:** For —Linda Kellogg, Perla Muñoz Hopkins, National Motto Project; Carrie Moore, Texas Education 911 and County Citizens Defending Freedom; Donald Garner, Texas Faith & Freedom Coalition; Judi DeHaan; Tom Nobis; Teresa Thomas (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jill Glover, Republican Party of Texas; Whitney Broughton, Texas Association of School Boards; Cindi Castilla, Karole Fedrick, Texas Eagle Forum; Dee Carney, Texas School Alliance; Jonathan Covey, Texas Values; Mary Elizabeth Castle, Jonathan Saenz, Texas Values Action; Julie McCarty, True TX Project; and eight individuals)

Against — Kathryn Kizer (*Registered, but did not testify*: Daniel Dawer, Educators in Solidarity; Nancy Kasten, Faith Commons; Paige Duggins-Clay, Intercultural Development Research Association; Denishea Williams, Texas Freedom Network; Joshua Houston, Texas Impact; and 23 individuals)

On — Shawn Hall Lecuona, BFQ (*Registered, but did not testify*: Eric Marin, TEA)

**BACKGROUND:** Under Education Code sec. 1.004, a public elementary or secondary school or an institution of higher education must display in a conspicuous place in each building of the school or institution a durable poster or framed copy of the United States motto, "In God We Trust," if the poster or framed copy is donated for display at the school or institution or purchased from private donations and made available to the school or institution. Requirements for a poster or framed copy of the national motto include that:

- the poster or framed copy must contain a representation of the United States flag centered under the national motto and a representation of the state flag; and
- the poster or framed copy may not depict any words, images, or other information other than the representations listed above.

Some have suggested that the display of the national motto can serve as a reminder of important values and principles and that current law does not adequately ensure that the motto is displayed within state classrooms.

**DIGEST:**

HB 2012 would specify that a classroom teacher at a public elementary or secondary school, or a teacher or professor at an institution of higher education, could not be prohibited from displaying in a classroom a poster or framed copy of the national motto that met the established requirements.

The bill would apply beginning with the 2023-24 school year. The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2023.