



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5018



Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
OPTIONAL TEACHING OF RELIGION IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY
AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Religion plays a crucial role in shaping the values, character, and cultural identity of individuals, especially during their formative years. While the principle of separation of church and state ensures that the government remains neutral in religious matters, it does not preclude the teaching of religion in public schools. Religious education, when conducted respectfully and voluntarily, promotes the spiritual, moral, and cultural development of students, fostering understanding and respect for diverse beliefs within a pluralistic society.

Article XIV, Section 3 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution states that religion may be taught to children or wards in public elementary and high schools during regular class hours. Such instruction must be conducted by teachers designated or approved by the religious authorities of the respective religion to which the children or wards belong, and this shall be provided at no additional cost to the government.

In line with the constitutional mandate, this bill proposes to require the teaching of religion in all public elementary and high schools for children or wards, provided that a written request from their parents or guardians and the submission of a duly accomplished application form is first obtained.

The State recognizes the significant role that religious education plays in the holistic development of its citizens, particularly the youth, by promoting their spiritual, moral, and cultural growth.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly requested.



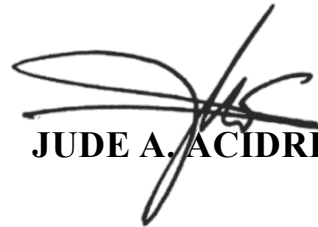
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Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Teaching of Religion in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the declared policy of the State in conformity with the mandate of the Constitution, to encourage and promote the teaching of religion to children in public elementary and high schools within the regular class hours.

The State is also cognizant of the vital role that the teaching of religion assumes in citizen formation, particularly the molding of our youth. Hence, the State

recognizes the necessity of religious instruction not only in the private school but also in public schools.

SEC. 3. *Coverage.* – This Order shall apply to all public elementary and high schools in the Philippines.

SEC. 4. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- (a) “*Religion*” – an institutionalized systems of belief, attitude, and practices;
- (b) “*Values educations*” – the integration into the school curriculum of universally accepted as well as Filipino human, social, moral, political, economic, and cultural values;
- (c) “*Optional religious instruction*” – refers to the religion classes conducted in the public elementary and high schools for students or pupils whose parents opted to exercise their right to request religious instruction for their children or ward. The optional character of religious instruction in public schools is in reference to the parents or guardians of the children, who are free to request or not to request that the children under their care be instructed in the religion of their choice. It is not option for the Principal or school heads to either accept or reject the formal request of the parents to have their children instructed in the religion of their choice during regular hours;
- (d) “*Regular class hours*” – refers to the regular or normal scheduled periods of instruction or laboratory work for a student;
- (e) “*Class period*” – the average length of time scheduled for one session or instructional period in a course.

SEC. 5. *The Teachers/Instructors.* – The religious teachers or instructors who teach religion classes in the public elementary and high schools shall be designated by their respective religious authorities and shall submit to the principal or school head their proper authorization papers and request for time allocation for the optional religious instruction.

Ordinary teachers teaching in a certain school may also teach religion in the same school during the periods when they are free from their ordinary teaching loads; Provided, that they are authorized to do so by the competent religious authority of their denomination.

SEC. 6. *Recipient of Religious Instruction.* – The teachers of religion as referred to in paragraph 4 shall be allowed to teach those pupils/students whose parents or guardians have opted to request that their children or wards be taught the religion of their choice.

The option to request their children or wards to learn religion in school shall be expressed in writing by the parents or guardian who shall likewise accomplish in full the necessary application form.

No student/pupil shall be allowed or permitted to attend religious instruction classes without the said written application and duly accomplished request of his/her parent or guardian.

SEC. 7. *Application.* – The application referred to in the next preceding paragraph, shall clearly indicate the faith or religious instruction the student/pupil should receive from the authorized religion teachers, and the preferred schedule for religious instruction.

SEC. 8. *Size and Scheduling of Religious Classes.* – The optional religious instruction shall be taught during class hours only and not before or after class time, or during recess time. Religion classes should not number more than forty students of the same level and of the same religion. In case the students of the same level and religion exceed that number, the principal or school head shall divide the students/pupils into two or more classes after consulting the religious authorities of that faith or the person delegated by them.

The principal or school head shall fix the schedule of the religion class hours considering the number of the religion teachers/instructors that can be fielded by the different denominations at one time.

SEC. 9. *Duration of Religion Classes.* – The optional religious instruction shall be allotted at least eighty (80) minutes a week, spread over at least two (2) but no more than three (3) meetings in one week. In no case shall the class periods be allotted less than eighty (80) minutes per week.

SEC. 10. *Optional Religious Instruction and Values Education.* – The optional religious instruction and the values education of this Department are two separate, different, and distinct subjects. As such, they shall be allotted separate class hours and in no case shall they be taken together by the student in one and the same class period; Provided, however, that if the principal or school head cannot find any available time slots for the optional religious instruction in the weekly class schedule, in agreement with the religious teachers or instructors, the optional religious instruction shall be allotted at least two (2) of the present five (5) time slots assigned every week to Values Education.

SEC. 11. *Administrative Sanctions.* – Any principal, school head, or teacher who violates any provision of this Order shall, after due process, be subjected to appropriate disciplinary sanctions.

SEC. 12. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 13. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, presidential proclamations, rules and regulations or parts thereof contrary to or inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 14. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,