

14101986D

SENATE BILL NO. 556

Offered January 8, 2014

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-203.3 of the Code of Virginia, relating to student religious viewpoint expression at school events.*

Patron—Black

Referred to Committee on Education and Health

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 22.1-203.3 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 22.1-203.3. Student religious viewpoint expression.**

A. Students may express their beliefs about religion in homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from discrimination based on the religious content of their submissions. Home and classroom work shall be judged by ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance and other legitimate pedagogical concerns identified by the school.

B. Each school division shall adopt a policy that:

1. Creates a limited public forum at all school events at which a student is permitted to publicly speak, including graduation ceremonies;

2. Provides the limited public forum in a manner that does not discriminate against a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint, if any, on an otherwise permissible subject by providing a method, based on neutral criteria, for the selection of student speakers at all school events at which a student is permitted to publicly speak; and

3. Requires each school division to provide a disclaimer, either in writing or orally, or both, in advance of any school event at which a student is permitted to publicly speak, including graduation ceremonies, that the school division does not endorse any religious viewpoint that may be expressed by student speakers.

C. Except as provided in subsection D, a school division shall not regulate a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject in a limited public forum created pursuant to this section.

D. Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit a school division's ability to regulate student speech that (i) would materially and substantially disrupt the work and discipline of the school or (ii) is obscene, vulgar, offensively lewd, or indecent.

INTRODUCED

SB556