

August 2019

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Protection of religious freedom has been and is the most important objective of the Southeast Law Institute. In many ways, religious freedom is the basis for our other individual freedoms. Religious freedom gives the individual the right to exercise his individual conscience in the conduct of his daily life.

Public school students have individual liberty. However, public school premises are restricted by law on religious related activities. In the 1960s, Bible reading and prayer were removed from public schools. Subsequent court decisions into the 1980s significantly restricted student activity. SLI attorneys participated in many cases and legislative efforts to restore the integrity of the Free Exercise Clause in the public-school context. We achieved great success.

However, what we could not achieve was restoration of religious activities conducted by the school. This would include Bible studies. While a recent law was passed that permits the Bible to be taught in Alabama public schools a secular way (i.e., as art, literature, history, *etcetera*), it does not permit the Bible to be taught in the way that it should be taught. This month's Educational Update discusses the recently passed Alabama Released Time Credit Act. As you will see, this new Act will permit students to leave school premises to have real Bible study and religious instruction and receive elective course credit for it.

It took several years to get this Act passed. But it was well worth the effort. Alabama legislators recognized the need for this and acted to pass the bill. We are glad to have been a part of that. Parents should now take advantage of this opportunity for their public school children.

Thank you very much for your continuing support. We hope you are having a good summer. With personal regards, I am,

Yours very truly,

A. Eric Johnston

AEJ/pmm