

Talking Points

Ten Commandments in public schools

- ***This proposal is misguided. It is harmful to my faith and to religious freedom for all.***
- Public schools are responsible for serving students of all faiths of no faith, not for indoctrinating students in matter of faith. The state has no authority to pick and choose Scripture to direct the religious beliefs and practices of its citizens.
- The Ten Commandments are Holy scripture, significant in the faith traditions of Christians and Jews; they aren't general rules of civics or government guidelines for behavior.
- The Ten Commandments address specific religious matters about which Christians (not to mention those of other faiths and of no faith) differ about their interpretation, significance and application in daily life. It is because of the importance of religion in the lives of individuals that the government must stay out of it.
- The government is doing faith no favors when it misuses religion in this way. It cheapens faith when Scripture is used by government to seek conformity in matters of religion or pretend that Ten Commandments are the basis of our laws.
- It is the responsibility of families and their faith communities to promote faith and instruct in matters of religious practice as they believe; it is not for legislators or teachers who are trained and obligated to provide an education for all students without regard to religion.
- Schools should not act in ways that divide students and their families, based on a favored religious tradition. Instead, schools should guard fiercely the religious liberty of all students. Families are entitled to send their children to public schools without fear of state-imposed religion.
- State-sponsorship of religion is unlikely to have the positive effect of teaching shared values to students that some of its proponents assert. Instead, it is more likely to discredit the voluntary adherence to religion that our religious freedom protects.
- The Supreme Court has held that the posting of the Ten Commandments in public schools is unconstitutional. *Stone v. Graham* (1980). That case has not been overturned, and this State has an obligation to follow the law of the land.