

Georgia insight

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"She hath done what she could."
Mark 14:8a
"...and having done all ... stand."
Ephesians 6:13c

D.C. Bible Study

Nine leaders in President Donald Trump's 24-member cabinet, including Vice President Pence, regularly participate in a weekly Bible study for prayer and fellowship in Washington, D.C. Sponsors of the Bible Study include two cabinet members from Georgia – Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue and Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price – along with three Georgia congressmen – Senator David Perdue, Representatives Rick Allen and Tom Graves.

Seven years ago, the D.C. Bible study was created by Capitol Ministries, whose founder, seven-foot-one-inch former national basketball player Ralph Dollinger, preached the gospel around the world at halftime wherever he played. Dollinger prepares and teaches the D.C. lessons that are translated into French, Spanish, and Russian, to reach national leaders in their own language.

The Georgia Capitol Commission Bible Study meets in Capitol Room 123 weekly during the session and monthly afterward. Attendees – officials, staff and lobbyists – enjoy a light lunch. Elsewhere, almost every other Tuesday at 9:55 a.m., members of the Georgia Public Service Commission have a five-minute, typically Christian, devotional to begin their work-day.

Officials honor Sundays in Georgia. Christian influence on Georgia legislators stops bills like S.B. 17 that would have changed Sunday-sale hours of on-site consumption of liquor by-the-drink. If it had passed, such sales could have begun at 10:30 Sunday morning.

S.B. 85 is a liquor bill that *did* pass this session, but left in place current law prohibiting sales of liquor-by-the-drink until 12:30 p.m. on Sundays, which upholds current liquor-by-the drink law. Action on these bills demonstrates the Georgia legislature's continued reverence for religious expression.

Georgia church honors Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue: On Sunday July 9th Second Baptist Church in Warner Robins commissioned Sonny and Mary Perdue as "missionaries to Washington, D.C." Their son, Jim, pastor of the Warner Robins Second Baptist Church, explained that the commissioning ceremony was held to recognize his parents for the "mission" they are undertaking by serving the nation in federal government.

NAFTA¹ and Secretary Perdue: On his first international trip as Agriculture Secretary, Sonny Perdue arrived in Toronto June 5th to discuss NAFTA with Canada's Agriculture Minister, to whom he said, "You just need to manage it [your dairy supply] and not overproduce to create a glut of milk solids on the world market that's being dumped at unfair prices."

On June 20th in Savannah, Perdue hosted agriculture officials of Canada and Mexico to discuss NAFTA "irritants," such as *Canada's dairy-supply export system* and *Mexico's sugar exports*.

¹The North American Free Trade Agreement that took effect in 1994 is set for renegotiation in mid-August. After China, Canada and Mexico are the second- and third-biggest buyers of U.S. farm goods. Mexico buys more U.S. corn and dairy products than any other country. The U.S. is the biggest export market for Canadian beef and pork and the U.S. buys about two-thirds of Canada's canola oil. About the June 20th meeting, Perdue said, "By and large, the agriculture sector feels like it's fared fairly well, but there are things that need to be changed, because the world has changed quite a bit."

NEA¹ Plans

“We can win. We have the power, and they know it!”

– NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia, July, 2017

Over the July 4th celebration of Independence Day, 7,000 NEA members gathered in Boston for their four-day annual conference to hear their president declare, “We can win. We have the power and they know it.” Their resolutions explain what they plan to win and how they’ll do it.

NEA Resolutions of 2017 Contradict Georgia Law

NEA-style immigration: The NEA passed resolution **NBI² 94** to support sanctuary *in cities and schools*, and promised to help create more. Resolution **NBI 18** outlines NEA’s position on aliens, which is: (a) The NEA opposes deportation; (b) and asks school staff NOT to cooperate with ICE agents or other official enquiries about immigration status. (c) NEA encourages school districts to adopt refusal-to-cooperate-with-ICE-agents policies, and (d) will issue a press release stating that school staff should not be encouraged or pressured to cooperate.

Contrast Georgia Law. In 2009 the Georgia General Assembly passed three bills that effect illegal aliens, specifically. (1) **S.B. 20** prohibits sanctuary policies by local governments, requires verification of lawful presence in the U.S., and provides penalties for noncompliance. (2) **S.B. 86** requires proof of citizenship for voter registration. (3) **H.B. 2** requires the state, counties, municipalities, and other governments to verify eligibility for jobs and/or benefits.

S.B. 269 became law on July 1, 2016, requiring all Georgia state agencies, including *publicly funded* colleges and universities, to submit annual immigration compliance reports or lose tax-payer funding. **H.B. 37** that prohibits sanctuary in *private* colleges and universities became law July 1, 2017. Private colleges and universities that give sanctuary will lose tax-payer funding.

NEA Resolutions of 2017 about Creation and Morality

NBI 86 authorizes censorship of exhibits NEA deems “offensive.” The first offending exhibit – NEA Ex-Gay Educators – implies that homosexuality is reversible. The other two offending exhibits – Creation Truth Outreach and Creation Science Educators – contradict evolution. Two standing rules will be used to determine whether those exhibits are offensive, per **NBI 154**. **NBI 17** calls on schools to adopt civil rights policies that, specifically, give LGBTQ civil rights status *based on sexual behavior*, although civil rights status for race, color, national origin and religion is *not based by behavior*. NBI 17 includes three strategies to abolish “cut-backs of student civil rights,” NEA believes occurred when the Trump administration reversed the 2016 guidelines for gender-neutral facilities. Meaning, regardless of community values and massive opposition, NEA wants gender-neutral restrooms and locker rooms in schools.

NBI 30 admits partnering with major organizations to track/collect data about “homophobia,” “transphobia,” and “Islamophobia,” for use in developing anti-bias training for education.

NBI 49 encourages affiliates to order the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network booklet “Just the Facts About Sexual Orientation and Youth: A Primer for Principals, Educators, and School Personnel.” Note that the book is a primer – textbook – for administrators and staff.

¹ NEA is the most powerful union of government employees. In 2012 delegates wore Obama campaign buttons and T-shirts and held banners saying, “You are our knight in shining armor.” The official NEA newspaper featured a full-page endorsement of him. NEA resolutions are anti-parent, anti-school-choice, pro-feminist, pro-homosexual, etc. In 2012 NEA budgeted \$9,933,492 for ballot measure campaigns, legislative battles, and lobby-campaign efforts.

² New Business Item

Then and Now: U.S. Supreme Court Upholds Religious Freedom

Q. Does the Tennessee statute barring “Minister[s] of the Gospel or priest[s] of any denomination whatever” from serving as legislators violate the free exercise of religion guaranteed through the First and Fourteenth Amendments?

A. Yes.

—U.S. Supreme Court *McDaniel v. Paty* Decision, April 19, 1978

Since 1796, Tennessee law had prohibited ministers from serving as legislators, but 182 years later on April 19, 1978 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the law unconstitutional. The question decided by the Court that day was: “Does the Tennessee statute barring ‘Minister[s] of the Gospel or priest[s] of any denomination whatever’ from serving as legislators violate the free exercise of religion guaranteed through the First and Fourteenth Amendments?”

Background: The Tennessee law was at issue when Baptist minister Paul A. McDaniel filed as a candidate to the 1977 state constitutional convention, and another candidate asked the court to declare McDaniel disqualified. After the Chancery court ruled the statute unconstitutional, McDaniel remained on the ballot and was elected. Following the election, the Supreme Court of Tennessee reversed the Chancery decision, holding that the law did not restrict his expression of religious belief. That decision was overturned in 1978 by the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *McDaniel v. Paty* that McDaniel was denied a benefit, solely, on his “status as a minister.”

Latest court decision: On June 26, 2017 the U.S. Supreme Court cited *McDaniel v. Paty* when *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia, Inc. v. Comer, Director Missouri Department of Natural Resources* upheld the Center’s right to a grant from the state. The Trinity Lutheran Church Child Learning Center, a Missouri pre-school and daycare facility, was originally established as a nonprofit. Later, it merged with Trinity Lutheran Church and operates under its auspices on church property, where coarse pea gravel covers the land under the playground equipment.

In 2012 the Center was denied participation in the Missouri Scrap Tire Program that offers grants to nonprofit organizations that apply for their playgrounds to be resurfaced with a product made from recycled tires. The Missouri State Department of Natural Resources rejected the Center’s application because it operates under the auspices of a church.

After lower courts ruled against the Center, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 7-2 on June 26, 2017 that the Center was denied the opportunity to compete with secular organizations for a grant “solely because it is a church,” a clear denial of the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment that “prohibits the government from outlawing or restricting the exercise of a religious practice, but generally does not prohibit withholding an affirmative benefit on account of religion.” Justices Sotomayor and Ginsburg cast the dissenting votes.

Ongoing videographer suit in Minnesota: In late 2016, Minnesotans Angel and Carl Larsen filed a pre-enforcement lawsuit challenging Minnesota’s Human Rights Act. Minnesota officials had informed the Larsens that they would be required to make films celebrating same-sex marriage if they made films celebrating marriage between one man and one woman. As Telescope Media Group owners, the Larsens have declined to video weddings until they have a favorable ruling on two Minnesota human rights statutes. The Larsens are represented in their lawsuit by Alliance Defending Freedom, a Scottsdale, Arizona-based conservative Christian non-profit organization that advocates “for the right of people to freely live out their faith.”

Non-Citizens NOT to be Admitted to the Practice of Law in Georgia

S.B. 231, introduced by Senator Josh McKoon, would require the Board of Bar Examiners to (a) verify the legal status of applicants seeking to practice law or to be a licensed attorney, and (b) confirm citizenship by the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program. S.B. 231 went to the Senate Judiciary Committee where it remains for 2018.

ACTION – Support for 2018. Contact Senate Judiciary Committee members: Senators Stone, Ch., 404 463-1314; Cowser, V-Ch., 463-1366; Tillery, Sec., 656-0089; Fort 656-5091; Hill, H., 463-2518; Jones, 463-3942; Kennedy, 656-0045; Kirk, 463-5258; Ligon, 463-1383; McKoon, 463-3931; Parent, 656-5109; Thompson, 463-1318.

School Recess Bill Still Alive for 2018 Session

When Representative Demetrius Douglas introduced **H.B. 273**, five co-sponsors were listed – Representatives Evans, Setzler, Strickland, Frye and Wilkerson – but they weren't the only ones supporting the bill. On the House floor, 147 legislators voted for it; only 17 voted against it.

H.B. 273 is only one of many bills across the country asking for recess to be reinstated in elementary schools. Georgia's bill *does not mandate recess* but requires local school boards to adopt a *written recess policy* for students K – 5.

Although reinstating recess is introduced in this bill, the wiggle room is so vast that a recess policy adopted on paper may never become a reality on the playground. Schools that volunteer to allow recess could cancel it on any day there's a structured activity for students or physical education or an assembly or field trip or an emergency or disaster or an act of God.

The last sentence in Georgia's H.B. 273 disclaims any connection with student health and safety, although facts prove that recess reduces stress. It provides mental rest from academics through the physical joy of playing, thinking, moving and socializing. All such recreation (read re-creation) refreshes the minds of youth and adolescents. Hence, they are more productive.

Bottom line: H.B. 273 *encourages* schools to schedule an average of 30 minutes of supervised unstructured activity daily, preferably, outdoors ... if nothing interferes and it doesn't rain.

The Senate Committee on Education and Youth favorably reported H.B. 273 out of committee, but it was tabled March 28th, leaving it alive for 2018. That's important. Since the bill is now supported by members of the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE), perhaps, it can be amended and passed in 2018 to *require* recess as a therapeutic need for students.

ACTION – Support for 2018. If you contact or see members of the Senate Education Committee in the next few months, ask them to strengthen H.B. 273 by *requiring* recess and report it out of committee in 2018. Senate Committee members are Senators Tippins, Ch., 404 657-0406; Wilkinson, V-Ch., 463-5257; Sims, Sec., 463-5259; Black, 656-3932; Brass, 656-6446; James, 463-1379; Millar, 463-2260; Parent, 656-5109; Stone, 463-1314, and Tate, 463-8053.

“Recess Moms:” After the Florida Senate committee refused to consider the 2016 recess bill, a group of “recess moms” continued working to get it passed. Result: In April 2017, a new bill, S. B. 78 requiring 100 minutes of recess per week, passed the Florida Senate, unanimously. To rally support in other states, a “recess mom” from Orlando went on Facebook and urged all moms everywhere to push for school recess. Currently, progress of the Florida recess bill is unknown, but if enough Georgia “recess moms” get behind H.B. 273, it could pass next session.

Although these bills suggest 20 – 30 minutes of recess per day, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the CDC recommend 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity every day.

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