

1 §1281. Legislative finding

2 The Legislature of Louisiana finds that:

3 (1) There is a need to educate and inform the public as to the history and
4 background of American **law** and Louisiana law.

5 (2) America and Louisiana's religious history plays an important role in the
6 background of our American **law** and Louisiana law.

7 (3) The role of religion in the constitutional history of both **the United States**
8 **of America and Louisiana is acknowledged by historians as part of our culture,**
9 **tradition, and history.**

10 (4) ~~The basic~~ **Basic** knowledge of American legal history is important to the
11 formation of civic virtue in our society **and, therefore, recognizing the historical**
12 **role of the Ten Commandments, the Mayflower Compact, the Declaration of**
13 **Independence, and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 accords with the nation's**
14 **history and reflects the founders' understanding of the necessity of civic**
15 **morality to a functional self-government.**

16 (5) The courts have provided vital direction to the Legislature of Louisiana
17 on how to approach the display of historical documents.

18 **(6) In 2005, the Supreme Court of the United States recognized that it is**
19 **permissible to display the Ten Commandments on government property in *Van***
20 ***Orden v. Perry*, 545 U.S. 677, 688 (2005).**

21 **(7) In 2019, the Supreme Court of the United States further recognized**
22 **that the Ten Commandments "have historical significance as one of the**
23 **foundations of our legal system. . .", in *American Legion v. American Humanist***
24 ***Association*, 588 U.S. 29, 53 (2019) and, the court also ruled that the displaying**
25 **of the Ten Commandments on public property may have "multiple purposes"**
26 **such as "historical significance as one of the foundations of our legal system"**
27 **and represents a "common cultural heritage". *Id.* at 54.**

28 **(8) The Mayflower Compact of 1620 was America's first written**
29 **constitution and made a Covenant with Almighty God to "form a civil body**

1 politic". This was the first purely American document of self-government and
2 affirmed the link between civil society and God.

3 (9) The Declaration of Independence, adopted by Congress on July 4,
4 1776, provides that "(we) hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are
5 created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable
6 Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness".

7 (10) The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 provided a method of admitting
8 new states to the Union from the territory as the country expanded to the
9 Pacific. The Ordinance "extended the fundamental principles of civil and
10 religious liberty" to the territories and stated that "(r)eligion, morality, and
11 knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind,
12 schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged".

13 ~~(6)~~**(11)** The Legislature of Louisiana now endorses the prolongation of a
14 uniform, sound, distinct, and appropriate presentation of the story of the role of
15 religion in the constitutional history of the United States of America and Louisiana,
16 which may be publicly displayed in court houses, ~~and~~ other state and local buildings,
17 at the Louisiana State Capitol, and throughout the state of Louisiana.

18 (12) The text of the Ten Commandments set forth in R.S. 25:1282(C) is
19 identical to the text of the Ten Commandments monument that was upheld by
20 the Supreme Court of the United States in *Van Orden v. Perry*, 545 U.S. 677, 688
21 (2005).

22 (13) It is the legislature's intent to apply the decision set forth by the
23 Supreme Court of the United States in *Van Orden v. Perry*, id, to continue the
24 rich tradition and ensure that the public has an opportunity to understand and
25 appreciate the foundational documents of our state and national government.

26 (14) The Supreme Court of the United States acknowledged that the Ten
27 Commandments may be displayed on government property when a private
28 donation is made for the purchase of the historical monument. *Pleasant Grove*
29 *City v. Summum*, 555 U.S. 460 (2009).

1 **(15) It is the intention of the Legislature of Louisiana that this Section**
2 **shall not create an unfunded mandate on any public governing authority.**
3 **Government agencies are encouraged to use documents that are printed, or**
4 **displays that are produced, and made available to the agency at no cost.**

5 §1282. Public displays of religious history impacting the law

6 A. Public displays with acknowledged religious history may include, but shall
7 not be limited to, **any of** the items in this Section.

8 B. The Mayflower Compact, written and adopted in 1620, the text **of** which
9 reads as follows:

10 Mayflower Compact (1620 A.D.)

11 Agreement Between the Settlers at New Plymouth: 1620

12 IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN. We, whose names are underwritten, the
13 Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord, King James, by the Grace of God, of
14 Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith. Having undertaken
15 for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our
16 King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern Parts of Virginia;
17 do by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the Presence of God and one
18 another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our
19 better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid: And by
20 Virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances,
21 Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and
22 convenient for the General good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due
23 submission and obedience. In Witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our
24 names at Cape Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord
25 King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the
26 fifty-fourth, Anno Domini; 1620.

27 C. The Ten Commandments, as extracted from the Bible. **The text shall read**
28 **as follows:**

29 **"The Ten Commandments**

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29

I AM the LORD thy God.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven images.

Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which

the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant,

nor his cattle, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."

* * *

§1283. Context of public display

Public displays set forth in R.S. 25:1282(B), (C), (D), and (E) shall be accompanied by a document entitled "Context for Acknowledging America's Religious History **as Culture, Tradition, and the History of Law**" which shall read as follows:

(†) Some documents stand out as pivotal in the religious history of America and Louisiana's legal system, among which are the Mayflower Compact, The Declaration of Independence as a legal foundation for the United States Constitution, the Ten Commandments as one of the foundations of our legal system, and the Northwest Ordinance, which was a primary document affirming faith and the first congressional act legally prohibiting slavery. It is hoped that their study and relation to each other and the history of our state and nation will foster an appreciation for the role that religion has played in the **culture, tradition, and legal history of the law** of America and the state of Louisiana and prompt further public study.

1 (2) American law, constitutionalism, and political theory have deep roots in
 2 religion. American ideals about liberty, freedom, equality, legal responsibility and
 3 codes of law, to mention a few, have roots and underpinnings in religion and biblical
 4 literacy. The Ten Commandments, which are found in the Book of Exodus in the Old
 5 Testament of the Bible, ~~was~~ were one of the earliest written expressions of law to be
 6 incorporated in American legal systems. The Ten Commandments, or the law of
 7 nature, also impacted the Declaration of Independence which refers to the "laws of
 8 nature and of Nature's God."

9 Section 2. R.S. 49:150.1(J) is hereby enacted to read as follows:

10 §150.1. State capitol complex; allocation of space; maintenance; law enforcement
 11 officer and firefighter memorial; Gold Star Families monument;
 12 African-American military service members monument; the Ten
 13 Commandments

14 * * *

15 J.(1) The commissioner of administration shall permit and arrange for
 16 the placement on the Louisiana State Capitol grounds of a suitable monument
 17 displaying the Ten Commandments. The commissioner shall designate the
 18 location of the monument, which shall be among other monuments, and shall
 19 oversee its installation. The design, construction, placement, and maintenance
 20 of the monument shall be free of charge to the state. The commissioner may
 21 delegate his responsibilities provided in this Subsection to the office of state
 22 buildings.

23 (2) The commissioner shall accept and consider proposals for the
 24 monument from private entities and shall select the proposal for the monument
 25 that will be installed. In selecting a proposal, the commissioner shall consider
 26 the appropriateness of the proposed design, the demonstrated ability of the
 27 responsible entity to pay the cost of design, construction, installation, and
 28 maintenance of the monument, and any other factor he deems appropriate. The
 29 commissioner shall make such selection by December 31, 2026; however, if he

1 has not received an acceptable proposal by that date, he shall select the first
 2 acceptable proposal he receives after that date.

3 (3)(a) The overall dimensions of the monument shall not exceed six feet
 4 in height, four feet in width, and four feet in depth, including any base on which
 5 the monument sits.

6 (b) The monument shall use the same text provided in R.S. 25:1282,
 7 which is the same text that was used in *Van Orden v. Perry*, 545 U.S. 677 (2005),
 8 that was ruled constitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States.

9 (c) The monument shall include a plaque that includes the text of the
 10 "Context for Acknowledging America's Religious History as Culture, Tradition,
 11 and the History of Law" as set forth in R.S. 25:1283.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Senate Legislative Services. The keyword, summary, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

DIGEST

SB 307 Engrossed

2026 Regular Session

Edmonds

Present law provides that the La. Legislature finds that:

- (1) There is a need to educate and inform the public as to the history and background of American and Louisiana law.
- (2) That America and Louisiana's religious history plays an important role in the background of our American and Louisiana law.
- (3) The role of religion in the constitutional history of both America and Louisiana is acknowledged by historians.
- (4) The basic knowledge of American legal history is important to the formation of civic virtue in our society.
- (5) The courts have provided vital direction to the Legislature on how to approach the display of historical documents.
- (6) A uniform, sound, distinct, and appropriate presentation of the story of the role of religion in the constitutional history of America and La. should be supported.

Proposed law retains present law and also adds the following additional legislative findings:

- (7) In 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court recognized that it is permissible to display the Ten Commandments on government property.
- (8) In 2019, the U.S. Supreme Court further recognized that the Ten Commandments have historical significance as one of the foundations of our legal system and that

displaying the Ten Commandments on public property may have multiple purposes, including historical significance and representing a common cultural heritage.

- (9) The Mayflower Compact of 1620 was America's first written constitution and made a Covenant with Almighty God to "form a civil body politic". This was the first purely American document of self-government and affirmed the link between civil society and God.
- (10) The Declaration of Independence, adopted by Congress on July 4, 1776, provides that all are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
- (11) The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 provided a method of admitting new states to the Union from the territory as the country expanded to the Pacific and extended the fundamental principles of civil and religious liberty to the territories and that religion, morality, and knowledge are necessary to good government and the happiness of all and that schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.
- (12) The text of the Ten Commandments set forth in proposed law is identical to the text of the Ten Commandments monument that was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2005.
- (13) It is the legislature's intent to apply the U.S. Supreme Court's 2005 decision to continue the rich tradition of displaying the Ten Commandments to ensure that all may understand and appreciate the foundational documents of our state and national government.
- (14) The U.S. Supreme Court stated in 2006 that the Ten Commandments may be displayed on government property when a private donation is made for the purchase of the historical monument.
- (15) It is the intention of the legislature that the Ten Commandments be printed, displayed, and made available to the agency free of charge.

Present law finds that the Legislature endorses the prolongation of a uniform, sound, distinct, and appropriate presentation of the story of the role of religion in the constitutional history of America and Louisiana, which may be publicly displayed in court houses and other state and local government buildings throughout the state.

Present law provides that public displays with acknowledged religious history may include, but shall not be limited to, the following:

- (1) The Mayflower Compact, written and adopted in 1620.
- (2) The Ten Commandments, as extracted from the Bible, Exodus Chapter 20.
- (3) The Declaration of Independence, adopted by Congress on July 4, 1776.
- (4) Articles I through VI of the Northwest Ordinance enacted by Congress on July 13, 1787, which prohibited slavery in the new territories and stated that "religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary for good government and the happiness of mankind."

Present law provides that the documents shall be accompanied by a document entitled "Context for Acknowledging America's Religious History," which states that certain documents stand out as pivotal in the religious history of America and Louisiana legal system, among which are the Mayflower Compact, The Declaration of Independence as a

legal foundation for the United States Constitution, the Ten Commandments as a foundation of our legal system, and the Northwest Ordinance, which was a primary document affirming faith as a foundation of prohibiting slavery. Present law states that American law, constitutionalism, and political theory have deep roots in religion. American ideals about liberty, freedom, equality, legal responsibility and codes of law, to mention a few, have roots and underpinnings in religion.

Present law provides that the Ten Commandments, found in the Book of Exodus in the Old Testament of the Bible, was one of the earliest written expressions of law to be incorporated in American legal systems. Proposed law also provides that the Ten Commandments also impacted the Declaration of Independence, which refers to the "laws of nature and of Nature's God."

Present law states that the division of state archives and records service within the office of the secretary of state shall, upon request, prepare and distribute to state offices, clerks of court, judges and local governing authorities in the state, copies of the documents, suitable for framing and display, upon receipt of funds to reimburse the secretary for the actual cost of the preparation and delivery of the documents. Proposed law states that the state offices, clerks of court, judges and local government buildings are authorized to post the documents for display provided by the secretary in a visible public location along with other historical documents. Present law allows state offices, clerks of court, judges, and local governing authorities to reprint themselves the documents or to accept the donation of already printed documents for display.

Proposed law retains present law and requires the commissioner of administration to permit and arrange for the placement on the Louisiana State Capitol grounds of a suitable monument displaying the Ten Commandments. Proposed law further requires the commissioner to designate the location of the monument, which shall be among other monuments, and to oversee its installation. Proposed law also allows the commissioner to delegate his responsibilities in proposed law to the office of state buildings.

Proposed law provides that design, construction, placement, and maintenance of the monument shall be without cost to the state.

Proposed law requires the commissioner to consider proposals for the monument from private entities and to select the proposal for the monument that will be installed. Proposed law further requires him to consider the appropriateness of the proposed design, the demonstrated ability of the responsible entity to pay the costs associated with the monument, and any other factor. Proposed law further provides that the commissioner shall make such selection by Dec. 31, 2026, unless he has not received an acceptable proposal by that date, in which case he shall select the first acceptable proposal he receives after that date.

Proposed law provides that the overall dimensions of the monument shall not exceed six feet in height by four feet wide by four feet width and that the text on the monument shall be the same as that used on the monument at issue in the court case *Van Orden v. Perry*, which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled constitutional.

Present law provides relative to public displays regarding the religious history of American and La. law. Proposed law further provides that public displays of the Mayflower Compact, the Ten Commandments, the Declaration of Independence, and Articles I through VI of the Northwest Ordinance shall be accompanied by a document entitled "Context for Acknowledging America's Religious History". Proposed law also specifies the text to be included in this document.

Proposed law requires that the Ten Commandments monument include a plaque with the text of the "Context for Acknowledging America's Religious History".

Effective August 1, 2026.

(Amends R.S. 25:1281, 1282(A), (B), and (C), and 1283; adds R.S. 49:150.1(J))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Education to the original bill

1. Technical Amendments