

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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September 3, 2025

SENT VIA U.S. MAIL & FAX: 512-463-2063

The Honorable Ken Paxton
Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General
P.O. Box 12548
Austin, TX 78711-2548

Re: Unconstitutional promotion of Christianity in Texas public schools

Dear Attorney General Paxton:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to object to your recent statement encouraging Texas schools to adopt time for prayer and Bible reading, and specifically urging students to recite the Lord's Prayer. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 42,000 members across the country, including more than 1,800 Texas members, as well as a local chapter in Austin. FFRF protects the constitutional separation between state and church and educates about nontheism.

On September 2, you issued a press statement encouraging all Texas schools to implement dedicated time for prayer and the reading of scripture, following the enactment of Senate Bill 11, saying that you want "the Word of God opened, the Ten Commandments displayed, and prayers lifted up" in classrooms.¹ You explicitly encouraged "children to begin with the Lord's Prayer, as taught by Jesus Christ."

Your statement also claims, "Twisted, radical liberals want to erase Truth, dismantle the solid foundation that America's success and strength were built upon, and erode the moral fabric of our society," and that "Our nation was founded on the rock of Biblical Truth, and [you] will not stand by while the far-left attempts to push our country into the sinking sand."

Senate Bill 11 is legally dubious, permitting school boards to set aside time for voluntary prayer or the reading of religious texts. But you crossed a clear constitutional line when you explicitly urged students to read "the Word of God" and encouraged them to recite the Lord's Prayer. The U.S. Supreme Court has been clear for more than 60 years that public schools may not constitutionally show favoritism toward or coerce belief or participation in religion. *See*

¹ <https://bit.ly/4g6Wcsw>.

generally Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe, 530 U.S. 290 (2000), *Lee v. Weisman*, 505 U.S. 577 (1992); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38 (1985); *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97 (1967); *Sch. Dist. of Abington Twp. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963); *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962). When you use your official position to instruct children to pray “as taught by Jesus Christ,” you send a message to Texas students and families that the state favors Christianity over all other religions and over nonreligion. This is precisely what the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment forbids.

Texas public schools exist to educate, not indoctrinate. Children are already free to pray on their own or read the bible privately. But government officials may not pressure or coerce schoolchildren to participate in prayer, nor promote one religion’s practices above all others. Students are a captive audience and highly susceptible to authority figures. Your exhortation to begin with the Lord’s Prayer effectively encourages teachers and administrators to proselytize in violation of the Constitution.

It is especially concerning that you have framed opposition to government-sponsored religion in public schools as “radical” or “anti-truth.” In reality, it is the Constitution itself, and decades of binding legal precedent, that prohibit public schools from imposing religion on students. The “solid foundation” of our country is not biblical truth, but rather our secular Constitution that protects the rights of all Americans, including Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, the nonreligious, and everyone else, to believe as they choose without government interference or favoritism.

We urge you to retract your call for Texas schools to promote prayer and scripture reading, and instead remind school boards and administrators of their constitutional obligations to remain neutral on matters of religion. FFRF will closely monitor this issue and stand ready to support Texas families if any school district’s actions under SB 11 violate students’ constitutional rights.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Line", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Christopher Line
Legal Counsel
Freedom From Religion Foundation