

Ten Commandments bill moves forward

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA—House lawmakers overwhelmingly approved a measure Wednesday that allows courthouses to display copies of the Ten Commandments, after hours of debate tinged with religious fervor.

The proposal to allow counties to display historical documents on public property passed by a 140-26 vote.

The bill's backers said the

Ten Commandments and other principles that guide the state's judicial system deserve to be publicly displayed if a county wishes.

"We feel there's a real need to educate the public on the history and background to American law," said state Rep. Tommy Benton, R-Jefferson. "The best place to display the documents is the courthouses and judicial buildings in counties."

Opponents said the bill would likely cost the state millions in legal fees to defend challenges in court. In a split decision, the U.S. Supreme Court last year declared two courthouse displays of the Ten Commandments in Kentucky unconstitutional.

Some also expressed concern with the measure's language, which also specifically permits the Mayflower Compact of 1620, the Declaration of Independence and the U.S.

Constitution to be displayed.

"If we lump the Bible with the Mayflower Compact and the Declaration of Independence, are we demeaning the Bible?" said state Rep. Frank Millar, R-Dunwoody. "I don't think the Bible belongs in that context." He added that he's more concerned with bolstering the state's education system "than where we hang the Ten Commandments."

The proposal now moves to the Senate.

Republicans said they were "hurt" and "offended" that a Ten Commandments bill even needs to be introduced.

"I do not think it's good or right to say we can't display the Ten Commandments unless we surround it with historic secular documents," said state Rep. Bobby Franklin, a Marietta Republican who once passed out framed copies of the tablet to every Georgia lawmaker. "If federal judges would simply interpret the words of the Constitution instead of amending it and rewriting it from the bench, they'd hold the same view."

Opponents rejected the use of religion to back the bill.

"The God we serve really and truly doesn't need the General Assembly to do his

bidding," said state Rep. Winfred Dukes, D-Albany.

The measure was prompted after public postings of the Ten Commandments sparked controversy in Barrow County.

In 2003, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit to remove a Ten Commandments plaque displayed at the Barrow County courthouse.

In July, Senior U.S. District Court Judge William C. O'Kelley ordered the plaque taken down, prohibiting what he said was "any substantially similar and unconstitutional presentation of the Ten Commandments" in the county courthouse. The county complied and decided not to appeal.

Bible Jubilee at Grace

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sary at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. For more information, call (704) 333-3741.

February 20

Grace Baptist Church, 1185 Little Road in Newton, will host its 27th annual King James Bible Jubilee through Thursday. Services begin nightly at 7 p.m. and morning services begin at 9 a.m. For more information, call (828) 464-7055.

The 2006 Mecklenburg County Missionary Union Annual Institute will host study classes through Thursday at Greater Fellowship Baptist Church, 2300 McClintock Road. Devotion services will begin at 6:45 p.m. nightly and classes begin at 7 p.m. For more information, call (704) 376-2853.

February 21

The Regional AIDS Interfaith Network (RAIN) will hold a Pastor's Summit at Simpson-Gillespie United Methodist Church, 3545 Beatties Ford Road, from 9:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The theme will be "I Never Thought of That: Accomplishing Effective Ministry in the Age of HIV/AIDS."

The principal facilitator will be Dr. Lyndon P. Abrams of UNC-Charlotte's Counseling Department of the College of Education. To register, call Akilah Luke at (704) 372-7246, extension 113. Registration is free and lunch will be provided.

February 28

The Second Calvary Baptist Church music ministry will present a concert of Negro spirituals at 5 p.m. For more information, call (704) 394-0378. The church is located at 114 Nelson Ave.

March 12

The Inspiration Choir of China Grove will celebrate their fourth anniversary at 3 p.m. The church is located at 9401 Old Pineville Road.

Timothy's mentor

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Testament gave them their strength, then we can find it, as well if we seek it.

Second, Paul told Timothy to make sure he lived a holy life, even though doing so would expose him to the same persecutions Paul had faced. Paul understood that there is simply no substitute for the desire to obey God's instruction and to devote oneself totally to service our Lord. Paul did not count the cost, for he knew God would be faithful to reward the efforts made on behalf of His king-

dom.

Finally, Paul instructed Timothy that he would have to bear up when he was tested in order for his faith and strength to be refined and developed. There is no way to develop a strong Christian character without facing and overcoming trials, including having to make sacrifices and endure persecutions.

Good mentors find their strength as they devote their lives totally to God, searching Scripture for God's truth to help them understand how to live and allowing God to test

What's going on at your church or mosque? Put it on our calendar.
E-mail Chervis F. Hodges at cheris.hodges@thecharlottepost.com



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