

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2013

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SENATE BILL 404

Short Title: Religious Study Credit.

(Public)

Sponsors: Senators Bingham (Primary Sponsor); and Brock.

Referred to: Education/Higher Education.

March 26, 2013

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE LOCAL BOARDS OF EDUCATION TO ADOPT POLICIES
3 ALLOWING STUDENTS TO ATTEND OFF-CAMPUS RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION,
4 AND TO AUTHORIZE LOCAL BOARDS OF EDUCATION TO AWARD ELECTIVE
5 CREDIT FOR OFF-CAMPUS RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

6 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

7 **SECTION 1.** Article 8 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by
8 adding a new section to read:

9 **"§ 115C-81.5. Release Time and Elective Credit for Religious Instruction.**

10 (a) Release Time for Religious Instruction. – Local boards of education may adopt
11 policies authorizing students to attend a class in religious instruction conducted by a private
12 entity at an off-campus location that is not school property during the instructional day if the
13 policy contains all of the following requirements:

- 14 (1) The student's parent or guardian provides written consent to the school.
15 (2) The sponsoring entity maintains attendance records and makes them
16 available to the school the student attends.
17 (3) The transportation to and from the off-campus place of instruction, including
18 transportation for children with disabilities, shall be the responsibility of the
19 sponsoring entity, parent, or guardian.
20 (4) The sponsoring entity shall make provisions for and shall assume liability
21 for the student attending the class in religious instruction.
22 (5) No public funds from any source shall be expended for and no public school
23 personnel shall be involved in providing religious instruction.
24 (6) Students shall not be released from a core academic subject class to attend a
25 religious instruction class.
26 (7) Students shall not be considered absent from school while attending a
27 religious instruction class pursuant to this section. It shall be the
28 responsibility of a participating student to make up any missed coursework.

29 (b) Elective Credit for Religious Instruction. – A local board of education may award
30 high school students no more than two elective course credits for the completion of classes in
31 religious instruction attended as provided in subsection (a) of this section. A local board shall
32 consider the following criteria in determining whether to award elective course credit for a
33 religious instruction course:

- 34 (1) The course shall be evaluated on the basis of purely secular criteria that are
35 substantially the same criteria used to evaluate similar classes at a
36 nonaccredited nonpublic school for the purpose of determining whether a



1 student transferring to a public high school from a nonaccredited nonpublic
2 high school would be awarded elective credit for such classes. Secular
3 criteria may include the following:

4 a. Number of hours of classroom instruction time.

5 b. Review of the course syllabus which reflects the course requirements
6 and materials used.

7 c. Methods of assessment used in the course.

8 d. Whether the course was taught by a certified teacher.

9 (2) The decision to award elective course credit shall be neutral as to, and shall
10 not involve any test for, religious content or denominational affiliation.

11 (3) Elective course credit awarded under this section shall be indicated on a
12 student transcript as a pass or fail and shall not be included in calculation of
13 class rank or a student's grade point average."

14 **SECTION 2.** This section is effective when it becomes law and applies beginning
15 with the 2013-2014 school year.