



[Comments](#) | Recommended 

Texas education board members back Bible curriculum

01:42 PM CDT on Saturday, September 27, 2008

By **TERRENCE STUTZ** / The Dallas Morning News
tstutz@dallasnews.com

AUSTIN – Four State Board of Education members have recommended to school districts a Bible course curriculum that was at the center of a lawsuit filed by parents against a West Texas school district.

In a letter sent to superintendents and school boards, the four board members said while they were not trying to prescribe the curriculum to be used in an elective Bible course authorized this summer, they wanted to recommend course materials sold by the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools.

"It makes logical sense to select a curriculum that has already been tested and proven within the field," the letter said. It was signed by Republican board members Barbara Cargill of The Woodlands, Cynthia Dunbar of Richmond, Terri Leo of Spring and Gail Lowe of Lampasas.

The materials were not recommended by the Texas Education Agency.

The National Council curriculum was the basis for a lawsuit filed by parents in the Ector County School District last year alleging that a Bible course in two Odessa high schools using the study plan violated the religious freedom rights of some students. The curriculum uses the King James version of the Bible as its main text.

Ector County school officials settled the lawsuit in March by agreeing to quit using the National Council class materials and switch to a curriculum developed by seven local educators.

The Texas Freedom Network, a progressive group that follows education issues, sharply criticized the four board members for the letter and noted they were part of a board majority that declined to set specific guidelines for the Bible course. TFN and others had argued that guidelines were needed to avoid lawsuits against school districts.

"These board members are recklessly encouraging school districts to adopt a curriculum that will put those districts and their taxpayers in legal jeopardy and threaten the religious freedom of families to pass on their own faith beliefs to their children," said Dan Quinn of the TFN.

But the four board members emphasized they "have no desire or intention of prescribing a set Bible curriculum for individual school districts to use. Rather, it is our desire to see local districts maintain complete control concerning this discretionary subject matter."

In August, Attorney General Greg Abbott decided that Texas high schools are not required to offer the

elective Bible course under a Bible study bill approved by the Legislature last year. While his legal opinion said schools must include some coverage of the Bible's impact on history and literature in their curriculum, they do not have to offer a separate Bible course unless a local school board chooses to do so.