



Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill speaks holds up a mini-display showing the Ten Commandments during a press conference regarding the Ten Commandments in schools Monday, Aug. 5, 2024, in Baton Rouge, La. Murrill announced on Monday that she is filing a brief in federal court asking a judge to dismiss a lawsuit seeking to overturn the state's new law requiring that the Ten Commandments be displayed in every public school classroom. (Hilary Scheinuk/The Advocate via AP)

Sara Cline

[View Author Profile](#)

Associated Press

[View Author Profile](#)

[Join the Conversation](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

Baton Rouge, La. — August 7, 2024

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

Louisiana's attorney general announced Monday that she is asking a federal court to dismiss a lawsuit that seeks to overturn the state's new law requiring the Ten Commandments to be displayed in every public school classroom by Jan. 1.

The suit was [filed in June](#) by parents of Louisiana public school children with various religious backgrounds who contend the law violates First Amendment language forbidding government establishment of religion and guaranteeing religious liberty. Proponents of the law argue that it is [not solely religious](#) but that the Ten Commandments have historical significance to the foundation of U.S. law.

As kids in Louisiana prepare to return to school this month, state officials presented large examples of posters featuring the Ten Commandments that Attorney General Liz Murrill argues "constitutionally comply with the law." The Republican said she is not aware of any school districts that have begun to implement the mandate, as the posters "haven't been produced yet."

Murrill said the court brief being filed, which was not immediately available, argues that "the lawsuit is premature and the plaintiffs cannot prove that they have any actual injury."

"That's because they don't allege to have seen any displays yet and they certainly can't allege that they have seen any display of the Ten Commandments that violates their constitutional rights," she added.

Murrill pointed to more than a dozen posters on display during Monday's press conference to support her argument that the displays can be done constitutionally, saying that they also show the Ten Commandments' historical and cultural significance. Some of the posters featured quotes from famous figures — late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Martin Luther King Jr., Moses and U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson — referencing the Ten Commandments.

Other posters took a more modern approach, even using memes. One example was a poster that included a photo from the 2004 film “Mean Girls,” where a main character played by Rachel McAdams says, “Why are you so obsessed with me?” The meme was surrounded by news headlines about the lawsuit filed against the new mandate. Another display featured the Ten Commandments next to the lyrics from the “Ten Duel Commandments,” a song from Lin-Manuel Miranda's Tony-award winning musical “Hamilton.”

“Each one of these posters illustrates something that we believe represents a constitutional application of the law,” Murrill said.

Advertisement

Based on the law’s language, “each public school governing authority” will decide exactly what their posters will look like. The Ten Commandments must be displayed on a poster or framed document at least 11 inches by 14 inches (28 by 36 centimeters) where the commandments are the central focus and “printed in a large, easily readable font.” In addition, each poster must be paired with the four-paragraph context statement.

Lawmakers also specified which version of Ten Commandments be used — a condensed version of the Scripture passage in Exodus. It has ties to “The Ten Commandments” movie from 1956, and it’s a variation of a version commonly associated with Protestants.

[Republican Gov. Jeff Landry](#) signed the legislation in June — making Louisiana the only state to require that the Ten Commandments be displayed in the classrooms of all public schools and state-funded universities. The measure was part of a slew of conservative priorities that [became law this year](#) in Louisiana.

When asked what he would say to parents who are upset about the Ten Commandments being displayed in their child's classroom, the governor replied: “If those posters are in school and they (parents) find them so vulgar, just tell the child not to look at it.”

In an agreement reached by the court and state [last month](#), the five schools specifically listed in the lawsuit will not post the commandments in classrooms before Nov. 15 and won’t make rules governing the law’s implementation before

then. The deadline to comply, Jan. 1, 2025, remains in place for schools across the state.

Louisiana's new law does not require school systems to spend public money on Ten Commandments posters. It allows the systems to accept donated posters or money to pay for the displays. [Questions still linger](#) about how the requirement will be enforced and what happens if there are not enough donations to fund the mandate.