

# USPC

US PASTOR COUNCIL

TO: Texas State Senators  
FROM: Dave Welch, Executive Director  
DATED: May 17, 2007  
RE: HB 3678, "The School Children's Religious Liberty Act

Religious liberty has been one of the most cherished of all freedoms in this country literally since Rev. Robert Hunt led the landing party to pray at Cape Henry, Virginia in 1607. The right to express one's faith privately and publicly been a part of the American heritage both pre and post Constitution. It is the position of the Texas clergy we represent that, as stated by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Tinker v. Des Moines School District* that, "*It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.*"

It is our desire to strongly urge every member of the Texas Senate to vote for H.B. 3678 in its original form, without the amendment attached by the House of Representatives. This bill has been drafted very carefully, incorporating state and federal court decisions and precedent, to assure that it is simply codifying into state law students' rights of religious expression as affirmed by the courts.

Attempts to introduce amendments to this bill will almost certainly render it vulnerable to court challenges and undermine or destroy the very purpose it is intended to serve. That purpose is to provide clarification and protection for school administrators, school boards, parents and students in regards to their rights and parameters of religious expression by students attending government schools.

We wish to make it very clear that we believe there is no defensible reason to oppose this legislation, nor modify it, unless a legislator is hostile to the religious expression that is protected by the courts even in this limited way as compared to historical freedoms. We ask you to vote for H.B. 3678, *with the House Amendment removed*, and vote for students rights, school protection and reasonable religious expression.