

May 22, 2012:

Senator Wentworth was the AUTHOR of SB 83 (78th regular session-2003).

<http://www.legis.state.tx.us/BillLookup/Text.aspx?LegSess=78R&Bill=SB83#>

Relating to DAILY pledges of alliance to the US and Texas Flags and to a DAILY observance of one minute of silent prayer in public schools.

The bill required students to recite the pledges of allegiance to the United States and Texas flags once each school day.

The bill also required a school district board of trustees to provide for the observance of one minute of silence following the pledge recitations, during which period a student may reflect, pray, meditate, or engage in any nondisruptive silent activity, and it requires a teacher or other person supervising the students to ensure that each student remains silent and does not distract another student.

Passed Legislature and signed into law by Governor Perry (Interesting foot-note: State Rep Elizabeth Ames Jones was NOT a House sponsor of this bill (not sure of "the back story here")... the House sponsors were Branch, Bohac, McClendon, Eissler and Kolkhorst.

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Wentworth's SB 83 unquestionably restored pledge and prayer in Texas schools as both were common practice in Texas schools prior to federal court rulings over prayer and prior to school districts becoming lax in their adherence to daily pledge.

SB 83's bil language itself is insightful with the restoration of "SHALL" for "MAY" in its text.

The bill changed the Education Code to **require** that schools recite the pledge of allegiance to both the US and Texas flags. Up to this point, the pledge in schools was not required and many parents wanted the **requirement** of a daily pledge to **restore** the daily pledge in schools

As for **restoration** of the right to prayer---In 1962, the US Supreme Court repealed officially sponsored prayer in school in the Engel v. Vitale case. After this case, there was a lot of confusion over the right of students to Voluntary prayer.....SB 83 **restored** and clarified a student's right to voluntary prayer by **REQUIRING** a minute of silence daily for students which specifically allowed for "voluntary prayer".