

Religion and the Schools:

- **Nearly all Alabamians (96%) profess themselves to be at least somewhat religious. Forty-seven percent of Alabamians characterize themselves as *very religious*, and 49% as *somewhat religious*. Only 3% report that they are *not at all religious*.**
- **Eighty-six percent of Alabamians encourage or strongly encourage the practice of daily prayer in the public schools, 92% favor silent prayer or meditation at the opening of each school day, and 87% approve of beginning public school athletic events with a prayer.**
- **Eight percent of respondents believe that public school instruction on the origins of mankind should be restricted only to evolutionary theory. Sixty-two percent prefer that both evolution and religious explanations be taught in the public schools, and 12% feel that only religious explanations be taught.**

(Auburn, May 6, 2005) The *Ask-Alabama* statewide public opinion survey on the perceptions and attitudes of Alabamians regarding religiosity, support for prayer in the public schools, and instruction on the origins of mankind underscores the importance of the practice of religion for the vast majority of Alabamians¹. The poll, conducted by Auburn University's Center for Governmental Services also suggests that most Alabamians would prefer to see prayer and religious belief become a more prominent feature in the public schools.

Ninety six percent of all Alabamians consider themselves to be at least somewhat religious. In addition, despite decades of court decisions prohibiting public prayer in public schools, Alabamians have not embraced these courts' conclusions. Over 85% of State residents would encourage daily opening prayers in the school, periods of silent prayer or meditation, and public prayer at school athletic events. There is also very strong support for the inclusion in the school curriculum of religious explanations on the origins of mankind, and nearly three out of four Alabamians (74%) believe that either only religious explanations (12%) or both evolution theory and religious explanations (62%) should be taught in the schools.

¹ The survey of a random telephone sample of 603 Alabamians was conducted from April 6-18, 2005. The average estimated margin of error is +/- 4%.

Religiosity

Nearly all Alabamians (96%), profess to be religious in their personal beliefs. Forty-seven percent identify themselves as *very religious*, and an additional 49% characterize themselves as *somewhat religious*. Only 3% state that they are not religious at all.

Alabamians and Religiosity (Spring 2005)

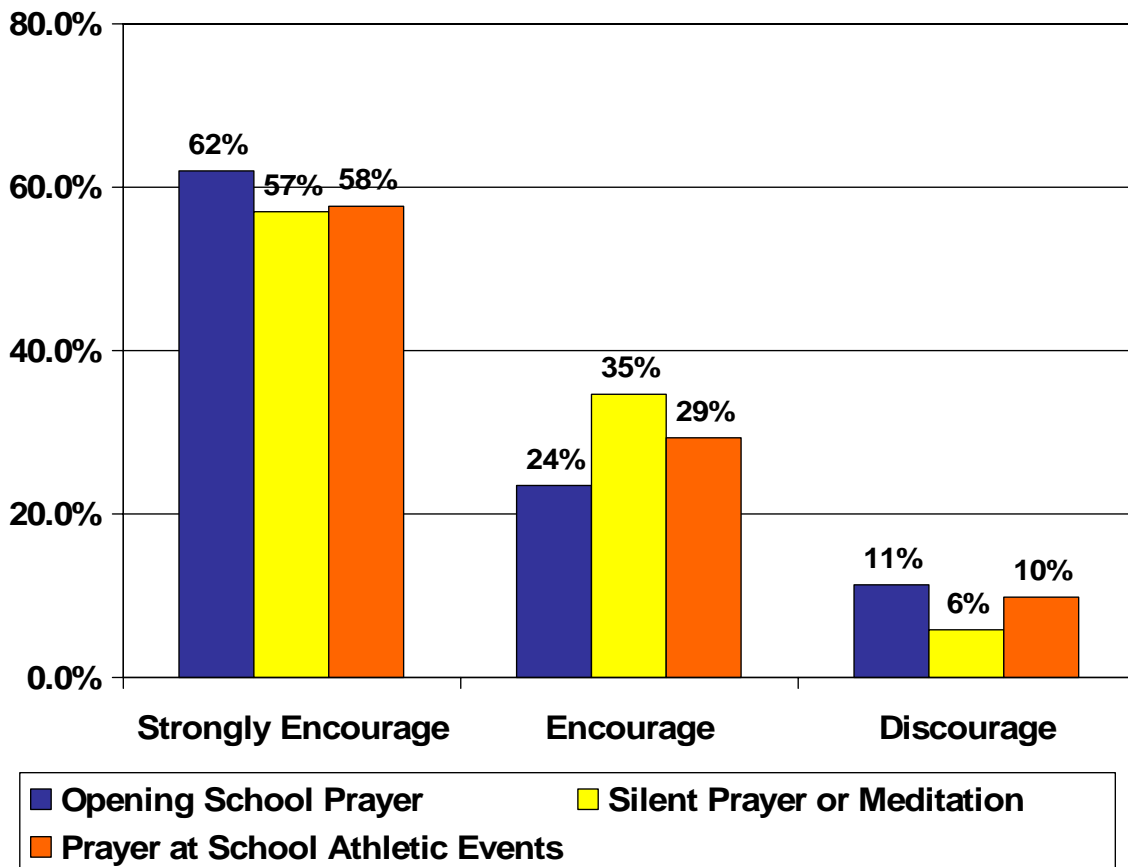


Prayer in the Public Schools

Alabamians strongly favor the use of prayer in the public schools. Sixty-two percent *strongly encourage* a practice of beginning each public school day with a prayer, and an additional 24% would *encourage* such a practice. Only 7% would discourage public prayer at the beginning of the school day, and 4% are strongly opposed to the practice.

Public support for a daily period for silent prayer or meditation in the public schools is very pronounced as well. Fifty-seven percent of Alabamians *strongly encourage* the practice, and an additional 35% would *encourage* a brief period set aside for silent prayer or meditation. Only 6% would *discourage* or *strongly discourage* schools from setting aside a brief time for silent prayer or meditation. In addition, an overwhelming majority of Alabamians (87%) would prefer to see public school athletic events begin with a prayer, and 58% are *strongly supportive* of public prayer in those circumstances.

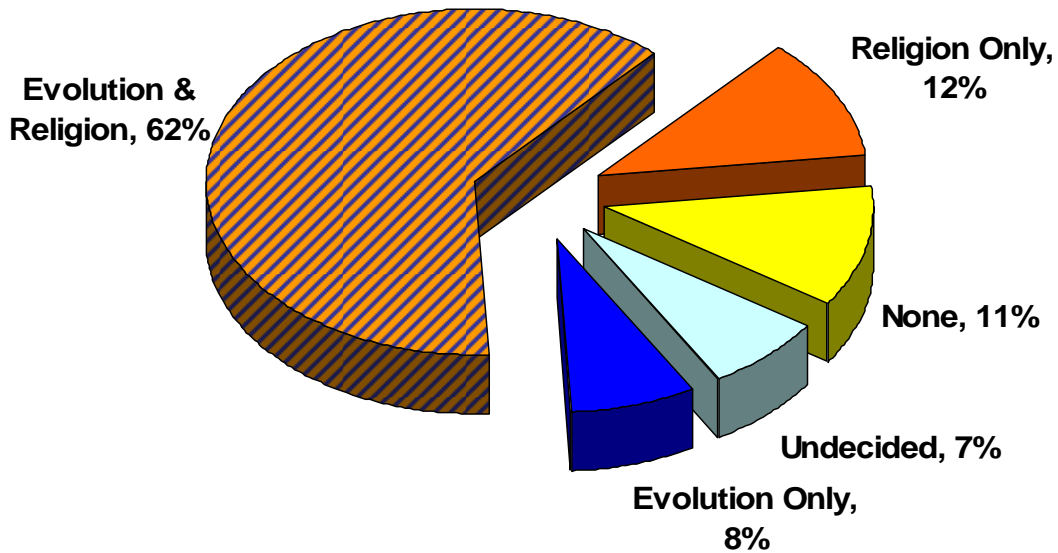
Alabamians Strongly Support Prayer in the Public Schools



Teaching About Human Origins in the Alabama Public Schools

Very few Alabamians are comfortable with a ban on teaching religious-based explanations for the origins of mankind in the public schools. Only 8% agree that the schools should teach only evolutionary theory. Sixty-two percent prefer that both evolution theory and religious-based explanations be presented on this topic, and 12% believe that only religious-based explanations be used in the classroom. Two thirds of the respondents (66%) would *support* or *strongly support* a state law that explicitly allows public school teachers to present religious-based explanations on our origins.

Preferred Approach on Teaching the Origins of Mankind in the Alabama Public School Curriculum



Support for a State Law Allowing Public School Teachers to Present Religious Explanations for the Origins of Mankind

