

Youth Culture Lesson
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Curses!

Teen Inspires State to Curtail Cussing

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What Happened:

Some experts believe that our country is becoming less cultured, more crass. We're more prone to swear than we once were, but some politicians are trying to reverse that trend. Last month, California lawmakers passed a resolution to create a "Cuss-Free Week."

The effort, introduced by Democrat Assemblyman Anthony Portantino, will be an annual event and is largely ceremonial: No one will go to jail for saying naughty words, but Portantino will dole out "cuss jars" to all state lawmakers.

"Our goal with this resolution is to get people to realize that words do matter," Portantino told *USA Today*. "At the end of the day, we may not eliminate profanity, but hopefully we can reduce the frequency with which it is used."

The Cuss-Free Week actually was inspired by McKay Hatch, a teen from South Pasadena, Calif., who started a No Cussing Club at his junior high in 2007. The movement has spawned a Web site with 35,000 members.

Hatch, now 16, attended the vote. "I want to bring as much awareness as I can to people about their language and how they're speaking to each other," he told the *Sacramento Bee*. "We need to stop tearing people down and uplift them instead."

Talk About It:

Profanity, it seems, is just a part of life. Most of us hear it at school or on the streets; sometimes we hear it at home or even in church. Does it bother you when other people swear? Why do you think people use bad language?

Do you ever swear? When? Why? Do you think, like Rep. Portantino that "Words do matter"? Is the language we use with each other important? Why?

Sometimes adults believe that teens are just kids—too young and immature to make a difference in the world—but McKay Hatch started his No Cussing Club when he was 14. Why do you think his movement's become so popular? Do you know of other teens who have helped make big, beneficial changes in their schools or neighborhoods? Do you think you could help make a difference?

What the Bible Says:

“He wore cursing as His garment; it entered into His body like water, into His bones like oil. May it be like a cloak wrapped about Him, like a belt tied forever around Him” (Ps. 109:18-19).

“At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’ ... Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for’” (Isa. 6:4-7).