

House Bill 132

By: Representatives Buckner of the 137th, Glanton of the 75th, and Holcomb of the 81st

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Part 2 of Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia
2 Annotated, relating to competencies and core curriculum, so as to require the State Board of
3 Education to develop comprehensive civics education curricula; to consider approaches for
4 teaching civic education; to provide for consultation with local boards of education and
5 voluntary associations; to provide for implementation; to provide for legislative findings; to
6 provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

7 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:**

8 **SECTION 1.**

9 The General Assembly finds that:

- 10 (1) Americans have become increasingly disengaged from our civic and political
11 institutions;
- 12 (2) Americans under the age of 25 are less likely to vote or otherwise participate in the
13 electoral process than their older counterparts or young people of past decades;
- 14 (3) School-based civics education has declined over a period of decades. As many as three
15 secondary school courses in democracy, civics, and government were commonly required
16 until the 1960's;
- 17 (4) In addition to knowing and understanding that citizens have legal rights, such as
18 Miranda rights, when interacting with law enforcement, students must also understand that
19 they have responsibilities as law abiding citizens;
- 20 (5) Our schools must provide students with the knowledge they need to become good
21 citizens, including instruction in American government, history, law, and democracy;
- 22 (6) Such instruction should include: classroom discussion of current local, national, and
23 international issues and events; community service opportunities linked to the formal
24 curriculum and classroom instruction; extracurricular activities for young people to get
25 involved in their schools or communities; student participation in school governance; and
26 student participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures;

- 27 (7) Schools should also include teaching students the operation of the court system, the
 28 indictment process, and the purpose and function of grand juries; and
 29 (8) Our students should be equipped with the skills and knowledge that will prepare them
 30 to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives.

31 SECTION 2.

32 Part 2 of Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
 33 relating to competencies and core curriculum, is amended by adding a new Code section to
 34 read as follows:

35 "20-2-149.2.

36 (a) The State Board of Education shall develop and implement comprehensive civics
 37 education curricula for all high schools and middle schools to improve students' civic
 38 knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Such curricula shall generally include the following:

39 (1) Formal instruction, using interactive methods, about the core documents, institutions,
 40 and processes of local, state, and federal government, such as the Constitution, the Bill
 41 of Rights, voting, the role of government, and the history and laws of the United States;

42 (2) Opportunities to apply classroom-based knowledge in 'real life' situations, including
 43 participation in community service, civic engagement projects, extracurricular activities
 44 such as student government, and mock elections or other simulations, combined with time
 45 for reflection and analysis of these experiences;

46 (3) Classroom discussion of local, national, and international issues, public policies, and
 47 events that put into social and political context the facts related to civic knowledge, as
 48 well as the encounters students have through their experiential learning opportunities;

49 (4) Classroom materials and discussion of the processes of political and social change,
 50 particularly those that illustrate the ways that change has occurred historically and the
 51 constitutional right that individuals and groups have to promote change;

52 (5) Classroom discussion of the values, responsibilities, rights, and benefits related to
 53 being an engaged and responsible citizen of one's community, state, and nation, as well
 54 as discussion of individuals who have made a difference at the local, state, national, and
 55 international levels; and

56 (6) Instruction on the operation of the court system, the indictment process, and the
 57 purpose and function of grand juries.

58 (b) The State Board of Education should consider the most promising approaches in
 59 teaching civic education, including:

60 (1) Teaching civics with materials from the mass media and popular culture;

61 (2) Classroom interaction with elected or appointed government officials;

62 (3) Community service requirements that directly relate to civic values;

- 63 (4) Competitions such as mock trials, quiz teams, or essay contests;
64 (5) Encouragement and facilitation of internships in government or nonprofit offices;
65 (6) Reading programs with civics education content; and
66 (7) Encouraging participation in social movements.
- 67 (c) In developing the civics education curricula pursuant to this Code section, the State
68 Board of Education shall consult with local boards of education and may draw upon
69 comprehensive standards for civics education developed by voluntary associations such as
70 the Center for Civic Education and the National Council for the Social Studies. Standards
71 and frameworks should be based on current research regarding the development of
72 students' conceptual understanding of civic principles, institutions, and processes.
- 73 (d) The State Board of Education shall complete its development of comprehensive civics
74 education curricula by January 1, 2016, and shall begin implementation of such curricula
75 in schools beginning in the 2016-2017 school year."

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SECTION 3.

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All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.