

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH LEGISLATURE
FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE BILL 225

Introduced by Dungan, 26.

Read first time January 10, 2023

Committee:

- 1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to schools; to amend section 79-724, Revised
- 2 Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2022; to change provisions relating
- 3 to the committee on American civics; and to repeal the original
- 4 section.
- 5 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 Section 1. Section 79-724, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,
2 2022, is amended to read:

3 79-724 It is the responsibility of society to ensure that youth are
4 given the opportunity to become competent, responsible, patriotic, and
5 civil citizens to ensure a strong, stable, just, and prosperous America.
6 Such a citizenry necessitates that every member thereof be knowledgeable
7 of our nation's history, government, geography, and economic system. The
8 youth in our state should be committed to the ideals and values of our
9 country's democracy and the constitutional republic established by the
10 people. Schools should help prepare our youth to make informed and
11 reasoned decisions for the public good. Civic competence is necessary to
12 sustain and improve our democratic way of life and must be taught in all
13 public, private, denominational, and parochial schools. A central role of
14 schools is to impart civic knowledge and skills that help our youth to
15 see the relevance of a civic dimension for their lives. Students should
16 be made fully aware of the liberties, opportunities, and advantages we
17 possess and the sacrifices and struggles of those through whose efforts
18 these benefits were gained. Since young people are most susceptible to
19 the acceptance of principles and doctrines that will influence them
20 throughout their lives, it is one of the first duties of our educational
21 system to conduct its activities, choose its textbooks, and arrange its
22 curriculum in such a way that the youth of our state have the opportunity
23 to become competent, responsible, patriotic, and civil American citizens.

24 (1) The school board of each school district shall, at the beginning
25 of each calendar year, appoint three of from its members and one student
26 from the district to a committee ~~a committee of three~~, to be known as the
27 committee on American civics, which shall:

28 (a) Hold no fewer than two public meetings annually, at least one
29 when public testimony is accepted;

30 (b) Keep minutes of each meeting showing the time and place of the
31 meeting, which members were present or absent, and the substance and

1 details of all matters discussed;

2 (c) Examine and ensure that the social studies curriculum used in
3 the district is aligned with the social studies standards adopted
4 pursuant to section 79-760.01 and teaches foundational knowledge in
5 civics, history, economics, financial literacy, and geography;

6 (d) Review and approve the social studies curriculum to ensure that
7 it stresses the services of the men and women who played a crucial role
8 in the achievement of national independence, establishment of our
9 constitutional government, and preservation of the union and includes the
10 incorporation of multicultural education as set forth in sections 79-719
11 to 79-723 in order to instill a pride and respect for the nation's
12 institutions and not be merely a recital of events and dates;

13 (e) Ensure that any curriculum recommended or approved by the
14 committee on American civics is made readily accessible to the public and
15 contains a reference to this section;

16 (f) Ensure that the district develops and utilizes formative,
17 interim, and summative assessments to measure student mastery of the
18 social studies standards adopted pursuant to section 79-760.01;

19 (g) Ensure that the social studies curriculum in the district
20 incorporates one or more of the following for each student:

21 (i) Administration of a written test that is identical to the entire
22 civics portion of the naturalization test used by United States
23 Citizenship and Immigration Services prior to the completion of eighth
24 grade and again prior to the completion of twelfth grade with the
25 individual score from each test for each student made available to a
26 parent or guardian of such student;~~or~~

27 (ii) Attendance or participation between the commencement of eighth
28 grade and completion of twelfth grade in a meeting of a public body as
29 defined by section 84-1409 followed by the completion of a project or
30 paper in which each student demonstrates or discusses the personal
31 learning experience of such student related to such attendance or

1 participation;~~or~~

2 (iii) Completion of a shift participating as a poll worker at a
3 local election for a student over sixteen years of age in accordance with
4 section 32-223 or 32-230 and completion of a project or paper in which
5 the student demonstrates or discusses the student's personal learning
6 experience related to such participation; or

7 (iv) (iii) Completion of a project or paper and a class presentation
8 between the commencement of eighth grade and the completion of twelfth
9 grade on a person or persons or an event commemorated by a holiday listed
10 in subdivision (6) of this section or on a topic related to such person
11 or persons or event; and

12 (h) Take all such other steps as will assure the carrying out of the
13 provisions of this section and provide a report to the school board
14 regarding the committee's findings and recommendations.

15 (2) All social studies courses approved for grade levels as provided
16 by this section shall include and adequately stress contributions of all
17 ethnic groups to (a) the development and growth of America into a great
18 nation, (b) art, music, education, medicine, literature, science,
19 politics, and government, and (c) the military in all of this nation's
20 wars.

21 (3) All grades of all public, private, denominational, and parochial
22 schools, below the sixth grade, shall devote at least one hour per week
23 to exercises or teaching periods for the following purpose:

24 (a) The discussion of noteworthy events pertaining to American
25 history or the exceptional acts of individuals and groups of Americans;

26 (b) The historical background, memorization, and singing of
27 patriotic songs such as the Star-Spangled Banner and America the
28 Beautiful;

29 (c) The development of respect for the American flag as a symbol of
30 freedom and the sacrifices of those who secured that freedom; and

31 (d) Instruction as to proper conduct in the presentation of the

1 American flag.

2 (4) In at least two of the three grades from the fifth grade to the
3 eighth grade in all public, private, denominational, and parochial
4 schools, time shall be set aside for the teaching of American history
5 from the social studies curriculum, which shall be taught in such a
6 manner that all students are given the opportunity to (a) become
7 competent, responsible, patriotic, and civil citizens who possess a deep
8 understanding of and respect for both the Constitution of the United
9 States and the Constitution of Nebraska and (b) prepare to preserve,
10 protect, and defend freedom and democracy in our nation and our world.

11 (5) In at least two courses in every high school, time shall be
12 devoted to the teaching of civics and American history as outlined in the
13 social studies standards adopted pursuant to section 79-760.01, during
14 which specific attention shall be given to the following matters:

15 (a) The Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution,
16 the Constitution of Nebraska, and the structure and function of local
17 government in this state;

18 (b) The benefits and advantages of representative government, the
19 rights and responsibilities of citizenship in our government, and the
20 dangers and fallacies of forms of government that restrict individual
21 freedoms or possess antidemocratic ideals such as, but not limited to,
22 Nazism and communism;

23 (c) The duties of citizenship, which include active participation in
24 the improvement of a citizen's community, state, country, and world and
25 the value and practice of civil discourse between opposing interests; and

26 (d) The application of knowledge in civics, history, economics,
27 financial literacy, and geography to address societal issues.

28 (6) Appropriate patriotic exercises suitable to the occasion shall
29 be held under the direction of the superintendent in every public,
30 private, denominational, and parochial school on George Washington's
31 birthday, Abraham Lincoln's birthday, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s

1 birthday, Native American Heritage Day, Constitution Day, Memorial Day,
2 Veterans Day, and Thanksgiving Day, or on the day or week preceding or
3 following such holiday, if the school is in session.

4 (7) Every school board, the State Board of Education, and the
5 superintendent of each school district in the state shall be held
6 directly responsible in the order named for carrying out this section.
7 Neglect thereof by any employee may be considered a cause for dismissal.

8 Sec. 2. Original section 79-724, Revised Statutes Cumulative
9 Supplement, 2022, is repealed.