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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2017

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - CIVIC LITERACY

Introduced By: Representatives Newberry, Knight, Blazejewski, Edwards, and Amore

Date Introduced: March 01, 2017

Referred To: House Health, Education & Welfare

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended
2 by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 22.3

4 THE CIVICS LITERACY ACT

5 **16-22.3-1. Short title.**

6 This chapter shall be known as and may be cited as "The Civics Literacy Act".

7 **16-22.3-2. Legislative findings.**

8 The legislature finds and declares that:

9 (1) The adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the signing of the
10 United States Constitution were principal events in the history of the United States, the
11 Declaration of Independence providing the philosophical foundation on which this nation rests
12 and the Constitution of the United States providing its structure of government.

13 (2) The Federalist Papers embody the most eloquent and forceful argument made in
14 support of the adoption of our republican form of government.

15 (3) These documents stand as the foundation of our form of democracy providing at the
16 same time the basis of our national identity and the vehicle for orderly growth and change.

17 (4) Many Americans lack even the most basic knowledge and understanding of the
18 history of our nation and the principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence, codified in
19 the Constitution and defended in the Federalist Papers.

1 (5) The survival of the republic requires that our nation's children, the future guardians of
2 its heritage, and participants in its governance, have a firm knowledge and understanding of its
3 principles and history.

4 **16-22.3-3. Purpose.**

5 The purpose and intent of this chapter are:

6 (1) To require, during the high school years, the teaching of the nation's founding and
7 related documents, which shall include the Declaration of Independence, the United States
8 Constitution, and the Federalist Papers.

9 (2) To require, that before receiving a certificate or diploma of graduation from high
10 school, students must have been tested on their knowledge of the Declaration of Independence,
11 the United States Constitution, and the Federalist Papers.

12 **16-22.3-4. Administration.**

13 The commissioner of elementary and secondary education shall adopt and promulgate
14 rules and regulations for the administration of this chapter to:

15 (1) Include among the requirements for secondary school graduation a passing grade on a
16 test of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Federalist Papers;

17 (2) Include in any standard state testing of high school students questions on the contents
18 of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Federalist Papers; and

19 (3) Specifically provide for curriculum content and teacher training to ensure that the
20 intent of this legislation is satisfied.

21 **16-22.3-5. Reporting and accountability.**

22 The commissioner of elementary and secondary education shall submit an annual report
23 to the governor and the legislature describing the specific rules and regulations issued pursuant to
24 this chapter and reporting the effectiveness of these rules and regulations as measured by the
25 passage of these courses involved pursuant to §16-22.3-3.

26 **16-22.3-6. Severability.**

27 If any provisions of this chapter are declared unconstitutional, or the applicability of any
28 provisions to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the constitutionality of the remainder of
29 this chapter and its applicability to other persons and circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

30 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO EDUCATION - CIVIC LITERACY

1 This act would require the commissioner of elementary and secondary education to adopt
2 a course of study on the nation's founding and related documents, including the Declaration of
3 Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Federalist Papers.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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