

[DISCUSSION DRAFT]

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to increase civics education programs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. CRIST introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to increase civics education programs, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Civics Learning Act
5 of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) The dearth of civics lessons available to stu-
2 dents across the United States has helped to foster
3 a political climate that is deeply partisan and di-
4 vided.

5 (2) Polarized party politics in the United States
6 has fractured public morale in our institutions and
7 has created an environment in which people are less
8 likely to be well-informed on the current state of af-
9 fairs and to participate in the political process.

10 (3) According to the Annenberg Constitution
11 Day Civics Survey conducted by the Annenberg Pub-
12 lic Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania—

13 (A) in 2018, only 32 percent of people in
14 the United States surveyed were capable of
15 naming all 3 branches of Government, while 33
16 percent of Americans were not able to name
17 any of the branches of government;

18 (B) in 2018, 30 percent of people in the
19 United States surveyed knew that the Senate is
20 in charge of Supreme Court nominee confirma-
21 tions; and

22 (C) in 2017, 37 percent could not name
23 any of the rights guaranteed under the First
24 Amendment.

1 (4) In 2014, only 23 percent of eighth graders
2 were found to have performed at or above the pro-
3 ficient level on the National Assessment of Edu-
4 cational Progress civics exam conducted by the Na-
5 tional Center of Education Studies.

6 (5) A lack of knowledge on the basics of the
7 structure of our democratic republic creates an in-
8 creasingly ill-prepared electorate which overtime has,
9 and will continue to, contribute to a weakened de-
10 mocracy.

11 **SEC. 3. AMENDMENTS TO THE ELEMENTARY AND SEC-**
12 **ONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1965.**

13 Section 2233 of the Elementary and Secondary Edu-
14 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6663) is amended—

15 (1) in subsection (a)—

16 (A) by inserting “and prioritize innovative
17 civics learning and teaching, including by en-
18 couraging” after “to encourage”; and

19 (B) by inserting “(including students and
20 teachers at high-need schools (as defined in sec-
21 tion 2221))” before the period;

22 (2) in subsection (b)—

23 (A) by inserting “and appropriated under
24 subsection (h) of this section” after
25 “2231(b)(2)”; and

1 (B) by striking paragraph (2) and insert-
2 ing the following:

3 “(2) may include—

4 “(A) hands-on civic engagement activities
5 for teachers and students;

6 “(B) activities about the history and prin-
7 ciples of the Constitution of the United States,
8 including the Bill of Rights;

9 “(C) before-school, during-school, after-
10 school, and extracurricular activities;

11 “(D) activities that include service learning
12 and community service projects that are linked
13 to school curriculum;

14 “(E) activities that encourage and support
15 student participation in school governance; and

16 “(F) online and video game based learn-
17 ing.”;

18 (3) in subsection (c), by striking paragraph (3)
19 and inserting the following:

20 “(3) DIVERSITY OF PROJECTS.—

21 “(A) DIVERSITY OF GRANTS.—In awarding
22 grants under this section, the Secretary shall
23 ensure that, to the extent practicable, grants
24 are distributed among eligible entities that will
25 serve geographically diverse areas, including

1 urban, suburban, and rural areas, and public el-
2 elementary schools.

3 “(B) ALLOCATION OF GRANT FUNDING.—
4 To the extent practicable based on the applica-
5 tions received under subsection (d), the Sec-
6 retary shall ensure that—

7 “(i) not less than 30 percent of the
8 grant funds under this section are awarded
9 to eligible entities that serve elementary
10 school students and teachers;

11 “(ii) not less than 30 percent of the
12 grant funds under this section are awarded
13 to eligible entities that serve middle school
14 students and teachers; and

15 “(iii) not more than 40 percent of the
16 grant funds under this section are awarded
17 to eligible entities that serve high school
18 students and teachers.”;

19 (4) in subsection (d), by inserting “, and con-
20 taining such information,” after “manner”; and

21 (5) by adding at the end the following:

22 “(f) GRANT AWARD PREFERENCE.—In awarding
23 grants under this section, the Secretary shall give pref-
24 erence to applications for programs that carry out the ac-

1 tivities listed in subsection (b)(2) for the purpose of
2 strengthening civics education and learning.

3 “(g) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after
4 the end of each fiscal year, the Secretary shall submit to
5 the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of
6 Representatives and the Committee on Health, Education,
7 Labor, and Pensions of the Senate a report containing—

8 “(1) a description of each eligible entity award-
9 ed a grant under this section during the preceding
10 fiscal year;

11 “(2) a description of whether each such eligible
12 entity was able to met each of the purposes under
13 subsection (a), and if so, how such eligible entity
14 was able to meet such purposes; and

15 “(3) any recommendations for continuation of
16 the grant program under this section.

17 “(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—In ad-
18 dition to the amounts reserved under section 2231(b)(2),
19 there are authorized to be appropriated \$30,000,000 to
20 carry out this section for fiscal year 2022.”.