

By: Bell of Kaufman

H.B. No. 3211

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to civics instruction in public schools.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subchapter J, Chapter 21, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 21.4555 to read as follows:

Sec. 21.4555. CIVICS ACADEMIES. (a) The commissioner shall develop and make available civics academies for teachers and administrators.

(b) The commissioner shall determine to what grade levels the civics academies apply. In making that determination, the commissioner shall include grade levels for which the State Board of Education makes significant revisions to the Texas essential knowledge and skills under Section 28.0025.

(c) A civics academy developed under this section must include training in at least:

(1) citizenship or civics and related social studies knowledge and skills as adopted by the State Board of Education;

(2) guided classroom discussion of current events, as appropriate for the grade level;

(3) simulations and models of governmental and democratic processes;

(4) media literacy, including instruction in verification of information and sources and the identification of propaganda, as appropriate for the grade level; and

1 (5) strategies for incorporating civics instruction
2 into other subject areas.

3 (d) From funds appropriated for that purpose, a teacher who
4 attends a civics academy may receive a stipend in the amount
5 determined by the commissioner. A stipend received under this
6 subsection is not considered in determining whether a district is
7 paying the teacher the minimum monthly salary under Section 21.402.

8 (e) On request of the commissioner, regional education
9 service centers shall assist the commissioner and agency with
10 training and other activities relating to the development and
11 operation of civics academies. The commissioner may seek
12 additional assistance from other public and private providers.

13 (f) The commissioner is required to implement this section
14 only if the legislature appropriates money specifically for that
15 purpose. If the legislature does not appropriate money
16 specifically for that purpose, the commissioner may, but is not
17 required to, implement this section using other appropriations
18 available for that purpose.

19 SECTION 2. Subchapter A, Chapter 28, Education Code, is
20 amended by adding Sections 28.0025 and 28.0201 to read as follows:

21 Sec. 28.0025. CIVICS CURRICULUM UPDATE. (a) In this
22 section:

23 (1) "Civic attitudes" means appreciating the
24 importance and responsibility of participation in civic life;
25 gaining values such as commitment to the United States' system of
26 government and appreciation for free speech and civil discourse;
27 and developing civic self-efficiency and understanding of

1 perspectives that differ from one's own.

2 (2) "Civic behaviors" means practicing civic habits,
3 including voting, engaging in deliberative discussions,
4 volunteering, attending public meetings, and other civic
5 activities.

6 (3) "Civic knowledge" means an understanding of the
7 history and heritage of civic life; the structure, functions, and
8 processes of civic institutions at all levels; founding-era
9 documents; geography and economics that affect public policy; and
10 the role of the citizen.

11 (4) "Civic skills" means the abilities necessary to
12 participate as an active and responsible citizen in a republic;
13 effectively engage in the civic life and civic institutions of
14 one's community, state, and nation; analyze text and determine the
15 reliability of sources; formulate and articulate reasoned
16 positions; and actively listen and engage in civil discourse.

17 (b) To ensure the students of Texas possess sufficient
18 knowledge of history to effectively engage in the civil discourse
19 of the republic and fulfill the requirements of Section 28.002(h),
20 the State Board of Education shall:

21 (1) for kindergarten through grade six, revise the
22 essential knowledge and skills for social studies to address
23 essential civic education, including civic knowledge, civic
24 skills, civic attitudes, and civic behaviors, and ensure sufficient
25 knowledge of history necessary to ensure proper context for the
26 understanding of civic knowledge, civic skills, civic attitudes,
27 and civic behaviors; and

1 (2) for grade seven through grade twelve, streamline
2 the essential knowledge and skills for social studies to enhance
3 civic knowledge, civic skills, civic attitudes, and civic
4 behaviors.

5 (c) The commissioner shall review prekindergarten
6 guidelines and incorporate revisions, if necessary, based on the
7 revisions to the essential knowledge and skills under this section.

8 (d) The State Board of Education shall adopt a recommended
9 reading list for kindergarten through grade twelve of
10 civics-focused texts that address the content of the social studies
11 essential knowledge and skills for each grade that can be used in
12 conjunction with teaching the English and Spanish language arts and
13 reading standards. The texts should, at a minimum:

14 (1) build background knowledge and vocabulary in
15 elementary grades; and

16 (2) provide a rich study in rhetoric, reasoning, and
17 argumentation in secondary grades.

18 (e) The agency shall make the reading list in Subsection (d)
19 available to every public school in the state.

20 (f) The commissioner shall review current research and
21 resources and provide proposed revisions to the applicable
22 essential knowledge and skills and a preliminary reading list as a
23 starting point for the State Board of Education's use in executing
24 its duties under Subsections (b) and (d).

25 (g) The State Board of Education shall adopt revisions under
26 this section on a timeline that allows the development of academies
27 under Section 21.4555 and compliance by public schools with Section

1 28.0201 by the timeline established in that section.

2 Sec. 28.0201. CIVICS INSTRUCTION. (a) Each school
3 district and open-enrollment charter school shall:

4 (1) integrate civics materials into its curriculum in
5 non-social studies courses, as appropriate; and

6 (2) ensure that each campus with grade levels
7 identified by the commissioner in Section 21.4555(b) has at least
8 one teacher and either a principal or a campus instructional leader
9 who has attended a civics academy developed under Section 21.4555.

10 (b) The agency shall provide assistance to school districts
11 and open-enrollment charter schools in complying with the
12 requirements under this section.

13 (c) Subsection (a) does not apply until school year
14 2024-2025. This subsection expires September 1, 2027.

15 (d) The commissioner may delay implementation of Subsection
16 (a) to a school year no later than school year 2026-2027, if the
17 revision of curriculum under Section 28.0025 or the availability of
18 civics academies does not occur at a pace that reasonably affords
19 public schools the ability to comply with Subsection (a). This
20 subsection expires September 1, 2027.

21 (e) Notwithstanding Subsections (c) and (d), the
22 commissioner may delay implementation of the requirement of
23 Subsection (a)(2) if, in accordance with Section 21.4555(f), civics
24 academies have not been developed or sufficiently developed to
25 allow school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to
26 comply with that requirement.

27 (f) The commissioner may adopt rules to implement this

1 section.

2 SECTION 3. Section 39.023, Education Code, is amended by
3 adding Subsection (c-9) to read as follows:

4 (c-9) An assessment instrument developed under Subsection
5 (a) or (c) may include excerpts from texts included on the
6 recommended reading list adopted under Section 28.0025(d).

7 SECTION 4. The Texas Education Agency is required to
8 implement a provision of this Act only if the legislature
9 appropriates money specifically for that purpose. If the
10 legislature does not appropriate money specifically for that
11 purpose, the agency may, but is not required to, implement a
12 provision of this Act using other appropriations available for that
13 purpose.

14 SECTION 5. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
15 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
16 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
17 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
18 Act takes effect September 1, 2021.