

By: Zaffirini

S.B. No. 1740

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT  
2 relating to the inclusion of civics education in public schools,  
3 including continuing education requirements on civics education  
4 for certain classroom teachers.

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

6 SECTION 1. Section 21.054, Education Code, is amended by  
7 amending Subsection (d) and adding Subsection (d-3) to read as  
8 follows:

9 (d) Continuing education requirements for a classroom  
10 teacher must provide that at least 25 percent of the training  
11 required every five years include instruction regarding:

12 (1) collecting and analyzing information that will  
13 improve effectiveness in the classroom;

14 (2) recognizing early warning indicators that a  
15 student may be at risk of dropping out of school;

16 (3) digital learning, digital teaching, and  
17 integrating technology into classroom instruction;

18 (4) educating diverse student populations, including:

19 (A) students who are eligible to participate in  
20 special education programs under Subchapter A, Chapter 29;

21 (B) students who are eligible to receive  
22 educational services required under Section 504, Rehabilitation  
23 Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Section 794);

24 (C) students with mental health conditions or who

1 engage in substance abuse;

2 (D) students with intellectual or developmental  
3 disabilities;

4 (E) students who are educationally  
5 disadvantaged;

6 (F) students of limited English proficiency; and

7 (G) students at risk of dropping out of school;

8 (5) understanding appropriate relationships,  
9 boundaries, and communications between educators and students;  
10 [~~and~~]

11 (6) how mental health conditions, including grief and  
12 trauma, affect student learning and behavior and how  
13 evidence-based, grief-informed, and trauma-informed strategies  
14 support the academic success of students affected by grief and  
15 trauma; and

16 (7) for a classroom teacher who teaches social  
17 studies:

18 (A) teaching a civics practicum required under  
19 Section 28.002(h-4), if the teacher teaches social studies at the  
20 applicable grade levels;

21 (B) leading guided classroom discussions of  
22 current events;

23 (C) simulations and models of governmental and  
24 democratic processes; and

25 (D) media literacy, including instruction on  
26 verifying information and sources and identifying propaganda.

27 (d-3) The agency shall maintain a list of available courses

1 that include instruction regarding teaching a civics practicum as  
2 described by Subsection (d)(7) and make the list readily accessible  
3 to classroom teachers who teach social studies.

4 SECTION 2. Section 28.002, Education Code, is amended by  
5 adding Subsections (h-2), (h-3), and (h-4) to read as follows:

6 (h-2) In adopting the essential knowledge and skills for the  
7 social studies curriculum under Subsection (a), the State Board of  
8 Education shall adopt essential knowledge and skills that develop  
9 each student's:

10 (1) civic knowledge, including an understanding of:

11 (A) the history, qualities, traditions, and  
12 features of civic engagement in the United States;

13 (B) the structure, function, and processes of  
14 government institutions at the federal, state, and local levels;

15 (C) the founding documents of the United States;

16 (D) how geography and economics affect federal,  
17 state, and local policy; and

18 (E) the role of a United States citizen;

19 (2) civic skills, including the skills necessary to:

20 (A) actively and responsibly participate as a  
21 citizen in a democracy;

22 (B) engage effectively in civic life and with  
23 government institutions at the federal, state, and local levels;

24 (C) analyze and determine the reliability of  
25 information sources;

26 (D) formulate and articulate reasoned positions;

27 (E) actively listen and engage in civil

1 discourse; and

2 (F) collaborate and engage in community  
3 organizing;

4 (3) civic attitudes, including:

5 (A) an appreciation for the importance and  
6 responsibility of participating in civic life;

7 (B) commitment to the United States and the  
8 United States' system of government;

9 (C) an appreciation for free speech and civil  
10 discourse;

11 (D) civic self-efficacy; and

12 (E) an understanding of different perspectives;

13 and

14 (4) civic behaviors through experiential learning,  
15 including:

16 (A) voting;

17 (B) engaging in deliberative discussions;

18 (C) volunteering;

19 (D) attending public meetings; and

20 (E) engaging in other civic activities.

21 (h-3) The agency shall ensure that each school district  
22 teaches civics education as part of the district's social studies  
23 curriculum in a manner consistent with the essential knowledge and  
24 skills adopted under Subsection (h-2).

25 (h-4) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules  
26 requiring each student to complete a student-led, content-focused  
27 civics practicum once during grade eight and once while in high

1 school as part of the social studies curriculum. Each civics  
2 practicum may be designed to be completed individually, in a small  
3 group, or as a class and must:

4 (1) be nonpartisan;

5 (2) be consistent with and clearly linked to the  
6 essential knowledge and skills adopted for social studies;

7 (3) focus on building civic knowledge, skills,  
8 attitudes, and behaviors as described by Subsection (h-2);

9 (4) promote a student's ability to:

10 (A) rigorously research and analyze information;

11 (B) make logical arguments with supporting  
12 evidence;

13 (C) present complex issues from multiple  
14 perspectives; and

15 (D) engage in civil discourse with people who  
16 hold positions different than the student's; and

17 (5) require a student to demonstrate an understanding  
18 of the relationship between federal, state, and local government  
19 and between the policies at each level of government.

20 SECTION 3. Subchapter A, Chapter 28, Education Code, is  
21 amended by adding Section 28.0028 to read as follows:

22 Sec. 28.0028. SUPPLEMENTAL READING LIST. (a) The agency  
23 shall develop a reading list of supplemental civics-focused texts  
24 for each grade level that a school district may use as part of the  
25 district's reading curriculum. The reading list developed under  
26 this section must be distributed to every school district and  
27 open-enrollment charter school not later than September 1 of each

1 school year.

2 (b) The reading list developed under Subsection (a):

3 (1) must:

4 (A) include only nonfiction texts; and

5 (B) be designed to:

6 (i) build civics background knowledge and  
7 vocabulary for the elementary grades; and

8 (ii) provide a rich study in rhetoric,  
9 reasoning, and argumentation for the secondary grades; and

10 (2) may include:

11 (A) the founding documents of the United States;

12 (B) biographies of prominent United States or  
13 Texas citizens; and

14 (C) the writings or speeches of national and  
15 state leaders.

16 (c) Not later than August 1 of each school year the agency  
17 shall review the list adopted under Subsection (a) and determine if  
18 any reading material should be:

19 (1) removed from the list; or

20 (2) added to the list.

21 SECTION 4. Subchapter 2, Chapter 29, Education Code, is  
22 amended by adding Section 29.919 to read as follows:

23 Sec. 29.919. CIVICS EDUCATION FUND AND GRANT PROGRAM. (a)

24 The civics education fund is a special fund in the treasury outside  
25 the general revenue fund. The fund is composed of:

26 (1) money appropriated or transferred to the credit of  
27 the fund by the legislature;

1           (2) gifts, grants, or donations contributed to the  
2 fund; and

3           (3) the returns received from investment of money in  
4 the fund.

5           (b) Before a gift, grant, or donation received from a  
6 private source may be deposited to the credit of the civics  
7 education fund, the agency shall ensure that the gift, grant, or  
8 donation is not accompanied by conditions that are detrimental to  
9 the neutral and rigorous teaching of civics or that will unduly  
10 influence the direction of civics education policy. The agency  
11 shall make available to the public any determination the agency  
12 makes under this subsection.

13           (c) Money in the civics education fund may be appropriated  
14 only for purposes of the grant program established under this  
15 section.

16           (d) The agency shall establish a competitive grant program  
17 to provide funding to school districts, open-enrollment charter  
18 schools, public institutions of higher education, and other  
19 relevant stakeholder organizations to assist with the  
20 implementation of civics education in public schools. In awarding  
21 grants, the agency may prioritize underserved communities, such as  
22 school districts or open-enrollment charter schools with high  
23 concentrations of educationally disadvantaged students.

24           (e) Money awarded under the grant program may be used only  
25 to:

26           (1) implement civics education, including to pay costs  
27 associated with professional development training in civics

1 education for classroom teachers who teach social studies; and  
2 (2) collaborate with stakeholder organizations for  
3 the implementation of civics education.

4 (f) The agency may contract with a qualified third party to  
5 manage the grant program.

6 (g) Not later than September 1 of each even-numbered year,  
7 the agency shall submit to the legislature a report on the civics  
8 education fund and the grant program. The report must include:

9 (1) the sources and amounts of money deposited to the  
10 credit of the fund;

11 (2) the amount and purposes of each expenditure from  
12 the fund;

13 (3) information regarding any grants provided to a  
14 public institution of higher education or another stakeholder  
15 organization; and

16 (4) anticipated revenue and expenditure projections  
17 for the fund for the next two years.

18 (h) The commissioner may adopt rules to implement this  
19 section.

20 SECTION 5. Section 39.023, Education Code, is amended by  
21 adding Subsections (a-17) and (c-9) to read as follows:

22 (a-17) A reading assessment instrument adopted or developed  
23 under Subsection (a) must include excerpts from texts included on  
24 the reading list developed under Section 28.0028 for the applicable  
25 grade level.

26 (c-9) The English I and English II end-of-course assessment  
27 instruments adopted under Subsection (c) must include excerpts from

1 texts included on the reading list developed under Section 28.0028  
2 for a high school grade level.

3 SECTION 6. (a) As soon as practicable after the effective  
4 date of this Act, the State Board for Educator Certification shall  
5 propose rules implementing Section 21.054(d), Education Code, as  
6 amended by this Act.

7 (b) A classroom teacher subject to continuing education  
8 requirements immediately before the effective date of this Act is  
9 not required to comply with the continuing education requirements  
10 described by Section 21.054(d), Education Code, as amended by this  
11 Act, for any continuing education requirements period that ends  
12 before January 1, 2022.

13 SECTION 7. Sections 28.002 and 39.023, Education Code, as  
14 amended by this Act, and Section 29.919, Education Code, as added by  
15 this Act, apply beginning with the 2022-2023 school year.

16 SECTION 8. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
17 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
18 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
19 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
20 Act takes effect September 1, 2021.