

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4928

To authorize the Secretary of Education to make grants to support educational programs in civics and history, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 30, 2020

Mr. COONS (for himself and Mr. CORNYN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Education to make grants to support educational programs in civics and history, 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 “Educating for Democ-
5 racy Act of 2020”.

6 **SEC. 2. PURPOSES.**

7 The purposes of this Act are—

8 (1) to support local educational agencies, ele-
9 mentary schools, and secondary schools in selecting

1 and making available to all students innovative, en-
2 gaging curricula and programs in civics and history
3 that prepare them to understand American Govern-
4 ment and engage in American democratic practices
5 as citizens and residents of the United States;

6 (2) to provide resources to institutions of higher
7 education for the purposes of offering effective pro-
8 fessional development opportunities to enable and
9 encourage teachers to deliver instruction that en-
10 engages students in learning civics and history;

11 (3) to provide resources to nonprofit organiza-
12 tions that have developed, or are developing, pro-
13 grams in civic education that incorporate practices
14 that are proven to be effective in engaging students,
15 and to assist in making such curricula and programs
16 more widely available to schools and students, par-
17 ticularly in rural and inner-city urban areas that
18 have traditionally been underserved by civic learning
19 programs;

20 (4) to provide resources to continue and expand
21 research into practices, methods, and approaches
22 that are effective in instructing elementary and sec-
23 ondary school students in civics and history; and

24 (5) to encourage participation in the National
25 Assessment of Educational Progress assessments in

1 civics and history in grades 4, 8, and 12, using a
2 methodology sufficient to provide accurate State-
3 level data on student proficiency in civics and history
4 disaggregated so as to have statistical significance
5 for every State.

6 **SEC. 3. GENERAL PROVISIONS.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—From amounts made available
8 under section 10 the Secretary of Education is authorized
9 to carry out the civics education grant programs described
10 in sections 4 through 7.

11 (b) APPLICATION.—To be considered for a grant
12 under this Act, an eligible entity shall submit to the Sec-
13 retary of Education an application at such time, in such
14 manner, and containing such information as the Secretary
15 may require.

16 (c) GRANT DURATION.—Each grant under this Act
17 shall be awarded for a period of not less than 3 years.

18 (d) PRIORITY.—Except as otherwise provided in this
19 Act, the Secretary shall prioritize the award of grants to
20 eligible entities that demonstrate the greatest potential
21 to—

22 (1) improve knowledge and engagement among
23 students traditionally underserved by comprehensive
24 civic education and American history programs, in-
25 cluding rural and inner-city urban students, English

1 learners, students who have not completed high
2 school, and other such students;

3 (2) close gaps in civic knowledge and achieve-
4 ment among students of different income levels, ra-
5 cial and ethnic groups, and native languages;

6 (3) improve performance on the National As-
7 sessment of Educational Progress assessments in
8 civics and history among students in grades 4, 8,
9 and 12;

10 (4) integrate evidence-based practices for pro-
11 moting student proficiency and engagement in civics;
12 and

13 (5) provide cost-effective, scalable delivery of
14 programs and services.

15 **SEC. 4. GRANTS TO STATES.**

16 (a) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary of Edu-
17 cation is authorized to make grants to States, on a com-
18 petitive basis, to support educational programs in civics
19 and history in accordance with this section.

20 (b) GRANT AMOUNT.—The amount of each grant to
21 a State under this section shall be proportional to the
22 amount received by all local educational agencies in the
23 State under part A of title I of the Elementary and Sec-
24 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311 et seq.)
25 for the previous fiscal year relative to the total such

1 amount received by all local educational agencies in every
2 State that receives a grant under this section.

3 (c) STATE RESERVATION.—A State that receives a
4 grant under this section may reserve not more than 5 per-
5 cent of the amount of the grant for—

6 (1) administrative costs of carrying out the
7 State’s responsibilities under this section; and

8 (2) monitoring and evaluating programs and
9 activities supported with the grant.

10 (d) SUBGRANTS TO LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGEN-
11 CIES.—A State that receives a grant under this section
12 shall use not less than 95 percent of the amount of the
13 grant to make subgrants, on a competitive or formula
14 basis, to local educational agencies within the State to as-
15 sist such agencies in carrying out programs to improve
16 the achievement of elementary and secondary school stu-
17 dents in the fields of civics and history.

18 (e) SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.—A State shall use
19 a grant under this section only to supplement the level
20 of Federal, State, and local public funds that would, in
21 absence of such grant, be made available for the activities
22 supported by the grant, and not to supplant such funds.

23 (f) CONTENTS OF APPLICATION.—As part of the ap-
24 plication required under section 3(b), a State shall include
25 a plan describing how the State intends to use the grant

1 under this section. Each State plan shall include, at a min-
2 imum, the following:

3 (1) An explanation of how the State will use the
4 grant to supplement, and not supplant, other public
5 funds provided for educational programs in civics
6 and history.

7 (2) Plans to address civics and history achieve-
8 ment gaps among students of different income lev-
9 els, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and native lan-
10 guages.

11 (3) Plans to improve civics and history achieve-
12 ment among traditionally underserved students, in-
13 cluding rural and urban students and English learn-
14 ers.

15 (4) Plans for making subgrants to local edu-
16 cational agencies as required under subsection (d),
17 including—

18 (A) details of how the State intends to dis-
19 tribute funding to local educational agencies,
20 whether by competition or through a formula-
21 based system;

22 (B) how the State's approach to distrib-
23 uting funds to local educational agencies will
24 take into account requirements of paragraphs
25 (1) through (3);

1 (C) criteria by which local educational
2 agencies' applications for funding will be evalu-
3 ated, including how such applications will take
4 into account the requirements of paragraphs
5 (1) through (3);

6 (D) how the State will ensure that local
7 educational agencies will use grant funds to
8 supplement, and not supplant, other public
9 funding for educational programs in civics and
10 history; and

11 (E) how the State will evaluate and hold
12 local educational agencies accountable for im-
13 proved student knowledge and achievement in
14 civics and history.

15 (5) An assurance that the State will participate
16 in the National Assessment of Educational Progress
17 assessments in civics and history in grades 4, 8, and
18 12.

19 (6) In the case of a State applying to renew a
20 grant previously received under this section, an eval-
21 uation of the effectiveness of the activities carried
22 out using the previous grant, which shall be based
23 on the results of the most recent National Assess-
24 ment of Educational Progress assessment in civics
25 and history, to the extent the results of such assess-

1 ment are available at the time of the State's applica-
2 tion.

3 **SEC. 5. GRANTS TO NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.**

4 (a) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary of Edu-
5 cation is authorized to make grants to qualified nonprofit
6 organizations, on a competitive basis, to assist such orga-
7 nizations in developing or expanding access to evidence-
8 based curricula, instructional models, and other edu-
9 cational programs to enhance student knowledge and
10 achievement in civics and history in elementary schools
11 and secondary schools.

12 (b) CONTENTS OF APPLICATION.—As part of the ap-
13 plication required under section 3(b), a qualified nonprofit
14 organization shall include a proposal that demonstrates
15 how the activities proposed to be carried out with the
16 grant under this section will enhance student knowledge
17 and achievement in civics and history in elementary
18 schools and secondary schools.

19 (c) PRIORITY OF AWARDS.—In awarding grants
20 under this section, the Secretary shall give priority to
21 qualified nonprofit organizations that propose to use the
22 grant to develop or expand access to curricula, instruc-
23 tional models, and other educational programs that—

1 (1) address the learning needs of traditionally
 2 underserved students, including rural and inner-city
 3 urban students and English learners; and

4 (2) incorporate evidence-based practices to en-
 5 hance student learning and engagement in civics and
 6 history.

7 **SEC. 6. GRANTS TO INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.**

8 (a) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary of Edu-
 9 cation is authorized to make grants to institutions of high-
 10 er education, on a competitive basis, to assist such institu-
 11 tions in developing and implementing programs to train
 12 elementary and secondary school teachers in methods for
 13 instructing and engaging students in civics and history.

14 (b) CONTENTS OF APPLICATION.—As part of the ap-
 15 plication required under section 3(b), an institution of
 16 higher education shall include a proposal demonstrating
 17 that the institution—

18 (1) has the ability to train elementary and sec-
 19 ondary school teachers to provide comprehensive
 20 civics education;

21 (2) is familiar with research on practices that
 22 are proven to contribute to effective instruction in
 23 civics and history and will incorporate such research
 24 into the training provided to teachers using the
 25 grant; and

1 (3) will use the grant to make training in civics
2 education available to elementary and secondary
3 school teachers in the State or geographic region
4 served by the institution.

5 (c) PRIORITY OF AWARDS.—In awarding grants
6 under this section, the Secretary shall give priority to in-
7 stitutions of higher education that propose to use the
8 grant to carry out training programs for teachers that—

9 (1) address the specific needs of teachers work-
10 ing with traditionally underserved students, includ-
11 ing rural and inner-city urban students and English
12 learners; and

13 (2) incorporate evidence-based practices for im-
14 proving the ability of teachers to provide effective in-
15 struction in civics and history.

16 **SEC. 7. RESEARCH GRANTS.**

17 (a) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary of Edu-
18 cation is authorized to make grants, on a competitive
19 basis, to qualified researchers to research and evaluate—

20 (1) elementary and secondary school students’
21 knowledge of civics and history; and

22 (2) effective instructional practices and educa-
23 tor professional development in the fields of civics
24 and history.

1 (b) CONTENTS OF APPLICATION.—As part of the ap-
2 plication required under section 3(b), a qualified re-
3 searcher shall include a description of the project to be
4 funded with the grant under this section. The description
5 of the project shall include a separate section that de-
6 scribes how the project may directly or indirectly affect
7 civics education generally, which may include effects such
8 as—

9 (1) achieving the full participation of women,
10 persons with disabilities, and underrepresented mi-
11 norities in civics and history education;

12 (2) increasing public civic literacy and civic en-
13 gagement;

14 (3) developing a diverse educator workforce; or

15 (4) other such effects.

16 (c) PRIORITY OF AWARDS.—In awarding grants
17 under this section, the Secretary shall give priority to
18 qualified researchers who propose to carry out activities
19 that will benefit historically underserved communities, in-
20 cluding rural and inner-city urban communities and com-
21 munities of English learners.

22 **SEC. 8. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL**
23 **PROGRESS.**

24 Section 303(b) of the Education Sciences Reform Act
25 of 2002 (20 U.S.C. 9622(b)) is amended—

1 (1) in paragraph (2)—

2 (A) by redesignating subparagraphs (D)
3 through (H) as subparagraphs (E) through (I)
4 respectively;

5 (B) by inserting after subparagraph (C)
6 the following:

7 “(D) conduct a national assessment, using
8 a methodology sufficient to provide accurate,
9 disaggregated, statistically significant State-
10 level data on student proficiency for every
11 State, on student academic achievement in pub-
12 lic and private elementary schools and sec-
13 ondary schools at least once every 2 years, in
14 grades 4, 8, and 12 in civics and history;” and

15 (C) in subparagraph (E), as so redesign-
16 nated, by striking “history, geography, civics”
17 and inserting “geography”; and

18 (2) in paragraph (3)(A)—

19 (A) in clause (i), by striking “(2)(E)” and
20 inserting “(2)(F)”;

21 (B) by redesignating clauses (iii) and (iv)
22 as clauses (iv) and (v), respectively;

23 (C) by inserting after clause (ii) the fol-
24 lowing:

1 “(iii) shall conduct biennial State aca-
2 demic assessments of student achievement
3 in civics and history in grades 4, 8, and
4 12, as described in paragraph (2)(D)”; and
5 (D) in clause (iv), as so redesignated, by
6 striking “(2)(D)” and inserting “(2)(E)”.

7 **SEC. 9. DEFINITIONS.**

8 In this Act:

9 (1) The term “civics”, when used with respect
10 to an educational program, means a program that
11 addresses the following:

12 (A) Acquisition of civic knowledge, includ-
13 ing an understanding of the history, heritage,
14 civic life, and civic institutions of the United
15 States.

16 (B) Acquisition of civic skills, such as the
17 ability to analyze text and determine the reli-
18 ability of sources and an understanding of the
19 ways in which civic institutions operate and how
20 individuals may be involved in civic life.

21 (C) Acquisition of civic dispositions, values
22 such as appreciation for free speech, civil dis-
23 course, tolerance and inclusion, and under-
24 standing perspectives that differ from one’s own
25 as well as a disposition to be civically engaged.

1 (D) Development of civic behaviors, includ-
2 ing civic habits and practices such as voting,
3 serving on juries, engagement in deliberative
4 discussions, volunteering, attending public
5 meetings, and other activities related to civic
6 life.

7 (2) The term “eligible entity” means—

8 (A) with respect to grant program under
9 section 4, a State;

10 (B) with respect to the grant program
11 under section 5, a qualified nonprofit organiza-
12 tion;

13 (C) with respect to the grant program
14 under section 6, an institution of higher edu-
15 cation; and

16 (D) with respect to the grant program
17 under section 7, a qualified researcher.

18 (3) The term “evidence-based practices” means
19 practices proven to contribute to the effectiveness of
20 educational programs in civics, including—

21 (A) innovative and engaging classroom in-
22 struction in civics, Government, and history;

23 (B) service learning and student civic
24 projects linked to classroom learning;

1 (C) learning through participation in mod-
 2 els and simulations of democratic processes and
 3 experiential learning;

4 (D) guided classroom discussion of current
 5 issues and events;

6 (E) meaningful participation in school gov-
 7 ernance; and

8 (F) instruction in media literacy.

9 (4) The term “institution of higher education”
 10 has the meaning given that term in section 101 of
 11 the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
 12 1001).

13 (5) The term “National Assessment of Edu-
 14 cational Progress” means the National Assessment
 15 of Educational Progress carried out under section
 16 303(b) of the National Assessment of Educational
 17 Progress Authorization Act (20 U.S.C. 9622(b)).

18 (6) The term “qualified nonprofit organization”
 19 means an organization that—

20 (A) is described in section 501(c)(3) of the
 21 Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and which is ex-
 22 empt from taxation under section 501(a) of
 23 such Code; and

24 (B) has experience developing curricula, in-
 25 structional models, and other educational pro-

1 grams for students in elementary schools and
2 secondary schools.

3 (7) The term “qualified researcher” means—

4 (A) a nonprofit organization that has abil-
5 ity and capacity to carry out scientifically valid
6 research; or

7 (B) an individual affiliated with such an
8 organization.

9 (8) The terms “English learner”, “elementary
10 school”, “local educational agency”, “secondary
11 school”, and “State” have the meanings given those
12 terms in section 8101 of the Elementary and Sec-
13 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

14 **SEC. 10. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

15 There are authorized to be appropriated for fiscal
16 year 2021 and each of the 5 succeeding fiscal years—

17 (1) \$600,000,000 to carry out section 4;

18 (2) \$200,000,000 to carry out section 5;

19 (3) \$150,000,000 to carry out section 6; and

20 (4) \$50,000,000 to carry out section 7.

○