

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 400

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 21, 2021

Mr. HASTINGS (for himself, Mr. AGUILAR, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. CARSON, Mr. CASTEN, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Mr. CICILLINE, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. CRIST, Ms. DEAN, Mr. DEFazio, Mr. DEUTCH, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mrs. HAYES, Mr. HIMES, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. KEATING, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Ms. KUSTER, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. LAWSON of Florida, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. MENG, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mrs. MURPHY of Florida, Mr. RASKIN, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Ms. SÁNCHEZ, Ms. SCANLON, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. SIRES, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Ms. WILD, and Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Civics Learning Act
3 of 2021”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds the following:

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

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

15 (3) According to the Annenberg Constitution
16 Day Civics Survey conducted by the Annenberg Pub-
17 lic Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania—

18 (A) in 2018, only 32 percent of people in
19 the United States surveyed were capable of
20 naming all 3 branches of Government, while 33
21 percent of Americans were not able to name
22 any of the branches of government;

23 (B) in 2018, 30 percent of people in the
24 United States surveyed knew that the Senate is
25 in charge of Supreme Court nominee confirma-
26 tions; and

1 (C) in 2017, 37 percent could not name
 2 any of the rights guaranteed under the First
 3 Amendment.

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

9 (5) A lack of knowledge on the basics of the
 10 structure of our democratic republic creates an in-
 11 creasingly ill-prepared electorate which over time
 12 has, and will continue to, contribute to a weakened
 13 democracy.

14 **SEC. 3. AMENDMENTS TO THE ELEMENTARY AND SEC-**
 15 **ONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1965.**

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

18 (1) in subsection (a)—

19 (A) by inserting “and prioritize innovative
 20 civics learning and teaching, including by en-
 21 couraging” after “to encourage”; and

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

25 (2) in subsection (b)—

1 (A) by inserting “and appropriated under
2 subsection (h) of this section” after
3 “2231(b)(2)”; and

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

6 “(2) may include—

7 “(A) hands-on civic engagement activities
8 for teachers and students;

9 “(B) activities about the history and prin-
10 ciples of the Constitution of the United States,
11 including the Bill of Rights;

12 “(C) before-school, during-school, after-
13 school, and extracurricular activities;

14 “(D) activities that include service learning
15 and community service projects that are linked
16 to school curriculum;

17 “(E) activities that encourage and support
18 student participation in school governance; and

19 “(F) online and video game based learn-
20 ing.”;

21 (3) in subsection (c), by striking paragraph (3)
22 and inserting the following:

23 “(3) DIVERSITY OF PROJECTS.—

24 “(A) DIVERSITY OF GRANTS.—In awarding
25 grants under this section, the Secretary shall

1 ensure that, to the extent practicable, grants
2 are distributed among eligible entities that will
3 serve geographically diverse areas, including
4 urban, suburban, and rural areas, and public el-
5 elementary schools.

6 “(B) ALLOCATION OF GRANT FUNDING.—

7 To the extent practicable based on the applica-
8 tions received under subsection (d), the Sec-
9 retary shall ensure that—

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

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

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

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

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

1 “(f) GRANT AWARD PREFERENCE.—In awarding
2 grants under this section, the Secretary shall give pref-
3 erence to applications for programs that carry out the ac-
4 tivities listed in subsection (b)(2) for the purpose of
5 strengthening civics education and learning.

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

11 “(1) a description of each eligible entity award-
12 ed a grant under this section during the preceding
13 fiscal year;

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

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

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

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