

ASSEMBLY, No. 2544

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 3, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman JON M. BRAMNICK
District 21 (Morris, Somerset and Union)
Assemblywoman NANCY F. MUNOZ
District 21 (Morris, Somerset and Union)
Assemblywoman MILA M. JASEY
District 27 (Essex and Morris)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblymen Mukherji, Benson, Assemblywoman Reynolds-Jackson,
Assemblyman McKeon, Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttie, Assemblyman
Thomson, Assemblywoman Swain and Assemblyman Scharfenberger

SYNOPSIS

Requires board of education to provide civics instruction in middle schools and requires DOE to provide funding to NJ Center for Civic Education at Rutgers to help prepare civics teachers.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 9/14/2020)

1 **AN ACT** concerning civics education in public middle schools and
2 supplementing chapter 35 of Title 18A of the New Jersey
3 Statutes.

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5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

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8 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

9 a. The most recent civics assessment of the National
10 Assessment of Educational Progress indicates that more than one-
11 third of high school seniors lack a basic grasp of the structure and
12 operations of American government;

13 b. Civic knowledge and engagement are essential to
14 maintaining a representative democracy;

15 c. The civic mission of the schools, which is to provide citizens
16 with the knowledge, skills, and inclination to participate in a
17 democratic society, was the primary purpose for which public
18 schools were originally established;

19 d. Independent studies concluded that well-designed civics
20 education programs foster an understanding and appreciation of
21 democracy and the skills for participation in a democratic society;

22 e. Teacher education and professional development are critical
23 to ensure effective classroom instruction in civics education;

24 f. By age 10, students have the ability to do the higher order
25 thinking necessary for a rigorous, relevant, reflective course in
26 civics, and students at this age are more open to attitudinal changes
27 than students at older ages; and

28 g. A required civics course in middle school will help to ensure
29 that all New Jersey students have the opportunity to gain the
30 knowledge and skills for active citizenship.

31
32 2. Beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, each board of
33 education shall provide a course of study about the values and
34 principles underlying the American system of constitutional
35 democracy, the function and limitations of government, and the role
36 of a citizen in a democratic society, which shall be taken by all
37 pupils in an appropriate middle school grade. The board shall
38 ensure that the course of study includes a minimum of one semester
39 of instruction, or the equivalent.

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41 3. The Department of Education shall provide a minimum of
42 \$250,000 a year for three years to the New Jersey Center for Civic
43 Education at Rutgers, the State University to enable the center to
44 provide a clearinghouse of materials, an online resource center,
45 technical assistance, professional development, and any other
46 activities deemed appropriate by the department to help prepare
47 teachers to teach the required middle school civics course of study.
48 These funds may be matched by support from other sources.

1 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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6 This bill requires the provision of civics instruction to middle
7 school pupils in public schools. Current law requires a course of
8 study in civics, geography, and the history of New Jersey to be
9 provided to public school elementary students, but no similar
10 requirement exists for middle school pupils. Under this bill,
11 beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, each board of education is
12 required to provide a course of study about the values and
13 principles underlying the American system of constitutional
14 democracy, the function and limitations of government, and the role
15 of a citizen in a democratic society. The course is to be taken by all
16 pupils in an appropriate middle school grade. The course of study
17 must include a minimum of one semester of instruction, or the
18 equivalent.

19 The bill also directs the Department of Education to annually
20 provide a minimum of \$250,000 a year for three years to the New
21 Jersey Center for Civic Education at Rutgers, the State University.
22 The purpose of the funding is to enable the center to provide a
23 clearinghouse of materials, an online resource center, technical
24 assistance, professional development and any other activities
25 deemed appropriate by the department to help prepare the teachers
26 who will be teaching the middle school civics course of study
27 required by the bill.