

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 3394

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 18, 2021

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 3394 (1R).

This bill makes revisions to current law that requires the State Department of Education to prepare curriculum guidelines for the teaching of civics for use by local school boards in implementing the two-year high school course of study in the history of the United States required under N.J.S.18A:35-1 and N.J.S.18A:35-2. The bill directs the New Jersey Center for Civic Education at Rutgers, The State University to prepare curriculum guidelines and provide professional development for high school social studies teachers in fulfilling the requirement of integrating civics, economics, and the history of New Jersey into the United States history course.

The bill requires the provision of civics instruction to middle school pupils in public schools. Current law requires a course of study in civics, geography, and the history of New Jersey to be provided to public school elementary students, but no similar requirement exists for middle school pupils. Under the bill, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, each board of education is required to provide a course of study about the values and principles underlying the American system of constitutional democracy, the function and limitations of government, and the role of a citizen in a democratic society. The course is to be taken by all pupils in an appropriate middle school grade. The course of study must include a minimum of two quarters of instruction, or the equivalent.

The bill also directs that the New Jersey Center for Civic Education at Rutgers, the State University will provide a clearinghouse of materials, an online resource center, technical assistance, professional development and any other activities to encourage the integration of civics, economics, and New Jersey history in the required high school course in the history of the United States and to enhance the teaching of civics in middle school required pursuant to the bill.

As reported by the committee, Assembly Bill No. 3394 (1R) is identical to Senate Bill No. 854/237 (SCS), which also was reported by the committee on this date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) estimates that there will be an indeterminate increase in annual State expenditures to provide funds to the New Jersey Center for Civic Education at Rutgers University to develop curriculum guidelines (currently prepared by the Department of Education) and newly provide professional development to high school social studies teachers to integrate civics, economics, and the history of New Jersey into the United States history course required under current law.

While the bill requires the center to provide a clearinghouse of materials, an online resource center, technical assistance, and professional development, the center currently provides many of the resources and services listed in the bill. Any increased costs incurred by the center will depend upon the extent to which its current resources and services address the integration of civics, economics, and New Jersey history into the current United States high school history course and the middle school civics course required under the bill.

School districts will incur increased annual costs to the extent that additional faculty are needed to meet the educational requirements of the bill, or if existing faculty members require new materials or engage in training offered by the center or another provider. The OLS cannot project what future resources school districts will require to meet the in-class instructional provisions of this bill and therefore cannot estimate the annual local cost impact.