

SCS SB 638 -- MISSOURI CIVICS EDUCATION INITIATIVE

SPONSOR: Riddle

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 9 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Select Committee on Education by a vote of 8 to 0.

This bill creates the "Missouri Civics Education Initiative."

This bill requires the subject of American civics to be included in the exam required for graduation from any public or private school, other than private trade schools (Section 170.011, RSMo). Any student entering ninth grade after July 1, 2017, who is attending a public, charter, or private school, except for private trade schools, shall pass an examination on the provisions and principles of American civics.

The test will consist of 100 questions similar to the 100 questions used by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. Each district must adopt a policy permitting a student with a disability to receive a waiver from the basic civics test requirement if the student's IEP committee recommends it (Section 170.345).

This bill also allows a school district to recognize a student's participation in the Constitution Project of the Missouri Supreme Court, as described in the bill (Section 170.350).

This bill also creates the Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia. The Task Force will advise and make recommendations to the Governor, General Assembly, and relevant state agencies. The Task Force will consist of 19 members, as described in the bill. Except for four legislative members and the Commissioner of Education, the members will be appointed by the President Pro Tem of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The Task Force will make recommendations for a statewide system for identification, intervention, and delivery of support for students with dyslexia, as described in the bill.

The Task Force will hire or contract for hire specialist services to support the work of the Task Force as necessary with appropriations or from other available funding.

The Task Force will terminate on August 31, 2018, unless reauthorized (Section 633.420).

This bill is similar to HB 1646 (2016) and SCS HCS HB 578, SB 271, SB 273, SB 548 and HCS HB 921 (2015).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say our students need to know this knowledge to partake in and maintain a "government by the people, for the people." It will help children to have a better knowledge of civics.

Testifying for the bill were Senator Riddle; Civics Proficiency Institute; Missouri School Board Association; Missouri Education Reform Council; Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and the Missouri Humanities Council.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say it might be a bit foolish to adopt something new when we haven't even learned all the current standards. We gain nothing through this bill but another wasted test and waste of class time to recite basic facts.

Testifying against the bill was the Missouri Coalition Against Common Core.