

I am Anne Mook, a former Representative to the House for 10 years, having served on the House Education Committee for 6 years and on Government Operations for 4 years during redistricting. I have a passion for Civics Education and Chaired a Civics Task Force during my time on the Education Committee. My background includes being a teacher and a coach, in addition to working with young people and staff of different ages in the field of recreation.

Though my notes from the Task Force are long gone, my memory is pretty good and when I speak it reflects our findings, and weaves some of our suggestions into the following.

As we all know, as we have campaigned over the years, we are alarmingly aware that much of the general public do not know what the Legislature does, the branches of government, how a bill is created and process to become law, what an individual's civil rights are, what democracy is and how the U.S. democracy differs from other countries in the world.

Unless a student has a dedicated teacher that includes some of the above information in a course, those graduating students do not know how to register to vote and why it is important or even what a ballot looks like. OR invites you to do a special day to their classroom to talk about what you do.

I implore you to pass a strong civics bill that will require students to take a Civics & Democracy class in 9th or 10th grade. No substitutions. This includes all independent and religious schools-and Tech schools, if not connected to a district high school. One of the outcomes of the Task Force, was that some districts were doing an outstanding job with a required civics class. Others we found that yes they offered Civics, but it was an elective; it may be only offered only 2 semesters a year. (Max of 50 students). Think of a high school with 300 students and if only 25 per year are eligible....Think How many are entering our voting market that have never seen a ballot, developed critical thinking skills in relation to determine false facts, realize the impact of social media on democracy, what are citizens responsibilities, knowing the branches of government, why there is a Constitution, how it was formed and what's in it, and know very limited State of Vermont history, etc. The task force found that where Civics was an elective, other courses on history, ie History of the Holocaust, or world History, could be substituted for Civics.

I do not think you need to legislate another task force. Go home and sit with principals of your area high schools, and find out how curriculum of history courses are determined. This will give you as a committee info to finalize your bill. Possible questions to ask: Is there a qualified teacher to teach civics? It has been 2 generations since civics has been required in some districts. We found that some history depts sit down and decide who teaches what course for the year. What if a Dept has a teacher that has not taken a civics course in their college curriculum? If young people are taking civics, their parents will also learn with them,...reaching 2 generations....all making them better citizens on participating in our communities and the act of voting. That is a good outcome!

I urge the AOE to take this very seriously. Civics has a domino affect. Our society is a world wide community with government, business, agriculture, energy, health to name a few. Democracy only works when we have an informed and educated citizenry; and that knowledge has an impact on our actions and reactions. The future of this State and country are dependent on the understanding of how one's vote and knowledge impacts all those things.

And I personally would like the Committee to take a look at all of our Vermont state colleges curriculum to see if a Civics course is available. Is it required for education majors, history majors, and available for current teachers of all ages, who are updating their education requirements.

◦ Whether it is S 17 or House 216 that moves forward, thank you for your commitment to Civics. I want to thank Senator McCormack for initiating S. 17. Thank you to this Committee for listening, and the Senator from Bennington for allowing me to come before you.

Respectfully,

/s/. Anne H. Mook, former State Representative , Bennington #2-2