

H.692

Introduced by Representatives Yacovone of Morristown and Lipsky of Stowe

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Education; courses of study; civics education; Agency of Education

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require school districts to provide civics education in grade 11 or grade 12, funded through State education funding.

An act relating to implementing civics education in high school curricula

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

This act may be cited as the “Civics Strengthens Democracy Act.”

Sec. 2. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) Neglect for civics in our secondary education system has contributed to a citizenry and electorate who are poorly prepared to understand, appreciate, and use our form of government and civic life.

1 (2) All students need to have the civic knowledge, skills, dispositions,
2 and behaviors necessary to participate in, preserve, and strengthen our
3 republic.

4 (3) Vermont should embrace civics education that:

5 (A) inspires students to want to become involved in their
6 constitutional democracy and help to sustain our republic;

7 (B) celebrates the compromises needed to make our constitutional
8 democracy work;

9 (C) cultivates civic honesty;

10 (D) is relevant and engaging for students and teaches civics in an
11 integrated and inquiry-based manner; and

12 (E) teaches civics through a timeline of historical events.

13 (4) Students who experience comprehensive, high-quality civics
14 education are more likely to vote and discuss politics at home, complete
15 college and develop employable skills, volunteer, and work on community
16 issues, and are more confident in their ability to speak publicly and
17 communicate with their elected representatives.

18 (5) The civic strength of our country relies on prioritizing and investing
19 in quality, comprehensive civic learning for the next generation of civic
20 participants.

1 Sec. 3. 16 V.S.A. § 914 is added to read:

2 § 914. CIVICS EDUCATION

3 (a) Definitions. As used in this section:

4 (1) “Agency” means the Agency of Education.

5 (2) “Civics” means a nonpartisan educational program that addresses:

6 (A) civic knowledge, which includes the acquisition of knowledge,
7 including an understanding of the history, heritage, civic life, and civic
8 institutions of the United States;

9 (B) civic skills, which includes the acquisition of skills, such as the
10 ability to analyze text and determine the reliability of sources, as well as an
11 understanding of the ways in which civic institutions operate and how
12 individuals may be involved in civic life;

13 (C) civic dispositions, which includes the acquisition of dispositions
14 and values such as appreciation for free speech, civil discourse, tolerance, and
15 inclusion, and an understanding of perspectives that differ from one’s own, as
16 well as a disposition to be civically engaged; and

17 (D) civic behavior, which includes the development of behaviors,
18 including civic habits and practices such as voting, serving on juries,
19 engagement in deliberative discussions, volunteering, attending public
20 meetings, and other activities related to civic life.

1 (b) In all public schools, civics shall be taught in either grade 11 or grade
2 12 as a required subject to promote civic service and a greater knowledge
3 thereof, and to prepare students, morally and intellectually, for the duties of
4 citizenship. The Agency shall require universal, equitable access to high-
5 quality civics learning experiences, including dedicated class time for civics, at
6 a minimum of one quarter-semester in duration.

7 Sec. 4. IMPLEMENTATION

8 School districts shall be required to comply with 16 V.S.A. § 914 beginning
9 in the 2027–2028 school year.

10 Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

11 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.