

**Constitution Revision Commission  
Education Committee  
Proposal Analysis**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the proposal as of the latest date listed below.)

Proposal #: P 10

Relating to: EDUCATION, Civic literacy in public education

Introducer(s): Commissioner Gaetz

Article/Section affected:

Date: January 24, 2018

	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	ED	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.	_____	_____

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**I. SUMMARY:**

The proposal creates a new Section, Article IX, in the Florida Constitution, which requires the Legislature to provide for the promotion of civic literacy in public education.

**II. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:**

**A. PRESENT SITUATION:**

Currently, there is no provision within the Florida Constitution that addresses civic literacy or civic education.

Civics Standards

Each district school board is required to provide instruction regarding the history, significance, and principles of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, flag education, and the arguments in support of adopting our republican form of government<sup>1</sup>. Districts are also required to provide a character-development program in kindergarten through grade 12. Each school district must develop or adopt a curriculum for its K-12 character-development program and submit it to the Department of Education (DOE) for approval.

Florida's Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for social studies includes civics content in kindergarten through grade 8 and in grades 9 through 12.<sup>2</sup> Each middle grades

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<sup>1</sup> Section 1003.42, F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Section 1003.41(2)(d), F.S.

student must complete three social studies classes in order to be promoted to high school, one semester of which must be in civics.<sup>3</sup> The law requires the middle grade civics course to include “the roles and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments; the structures and functions of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government; and the meaning and significance of historic documents, such as the Articles of Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States.”<sup>4</sup>

This course requirement also includes a required statewide, standardized end-of-course (EOC) assessment in civics.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the students score on the Civics EOC must constitute 30 percent of the student’s final course grade.<sup>6</sup> Overall student performance on the Civics EOC increased by 2 percentage points (67% to 69%) from 2016 to 2017 and 8 percentage points from its inception in 2014 (61% to 69%).<sup>7</sup>

Each public high school student must earn a one-half course credit each in U.S. Government and economics, including financial literacy, and one credit each in World History and U.S. History.<sup>8</sup>

Florida statute also establishes Celebrate Freedom Week.<sup>9</sup> The law provides that, “To educate students about the sacrifices made for freedom in the founding of this country and the values on which this country was founded, the last full week of classes in September shall be recognized in public schools as Celebrate Freedom Week. Celebrate Freedom Week must include at least 3 hours of appropriate instruction in each social studies class, as determined by each school district, which instruction shall include an in-depth study of the intent, meaning, and importance of the Declaration of Independence.” “To emphasize the importance of this week, at the beginning of each school day or in homeroom, during the last full week of September, public school principals and teachers shall conduct an oral recitation by students of the following words of the Declaration of Independence....” “Student recitation of this statement shall serve to reaffirm the American ideals of individual liberty.”

To aid students in their responsibilities as citizens, Florida statute provides that,<sup>10</sup> “The Department of Education shall encourage school districts to initiate, adopt, expand, and institutionalize service-learning programs, activities, and policies in kindergarten through grade 12. Service learning refers to a student-centered, research-based teaching and learning strategy that engages students in meaningful service activities in their schools or communities. Service-learning activities are directly tied to academic curricula, standards, and course, district, or state assessments. Service-learning activities foster academic

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<sup>3</sup> Section 1003.4156(c), F.S.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(b), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Section 1003.4156(c), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5668/urlt/90NGSSSPacket.pdf> (last visited 1/24/2018)

<sup>8</sup> Section 1003.4282(3)(d), F.S.

<sup>9</sup> Section 1003.421(1)-(3), F.S.

<sup>10</sup> Section 1003.497(1), F.S.

achievement, character development, civic engagement, and career exploration and enable students to apply curriculum content, skills, and behaviors taught in the classroom.”

### 2017 Legislative Changes

The 2017 legislative session expanded civics education in Florida.<sup>11</sup> Section 683.1455, F.S., was created to designate September as “American Founders’ Month.” The governor is authorized to annually issue a proclamation urging all civic, fraternal, and religious organizations and public and private educational institutions to recognize and observe this occasion through appropriate programs, meetings, services, or celebrations, in which state, county and local governmental officials are invited to participate.<sup>12</sup> Section 1003.44, F.S., regarding patriotic programs, was amended to state, “All public schools in the state are encouraged to coordinate, at all grade levels, instruction related to our nation’s founding fathers with ‘American Founders’ Month’ pursuant to s. 683.1455 Florida Statutes.”

A new section was created which provides that the priorities of Florida’s K-20 education system include civic literacy and that students are prepared to become civically engaged and knowledgeable adults who make positive contributions to their communities.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the 2017 legislative session created the requirement that beginning with students initially entering a Florida College System institution or state university in the 2018-19 school year and thereafter, each student must demonstrate competency in civic literacy.<sup>14</sup> Students have the option to complete a civic literacy course or to achieve a passing score on an assessment. The State Board of Education and Board of Governors are required to jointly appoint a faculty committee to develop a new course in civic literacy or revise an existing general education core course in American History or American Government to include civic literacy. The committee is also required to establish core competencies and identify outcomes that include an understanding of the basic principles of American democracy and how they are applied in our republican form of government, an understanding of the United States Constitution, knowledge of the founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of our institutions of self-governance, and an understanding of landmark Supreme Court cases and their impact on law and society.

As of February 2017, nine states had a similar postsecondary requirement in statute for civics education: Texas, Oklahoma, Utah, Arkansas, California, Georgia, Massachusetts, Missouri, and Nevada.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> part of HB 7069

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/standards/subject-areas/social-studies/American-Founders-Month.stml> (last visited 1/24/18)

<sup>13</sup> Section 1000.03(5)(c), F.S.

<sup>14</sup> Section 1007.25(4), F.S., created by HB 7069 in 2017

<sup>15</sup> CRC Education Committee Presentation by Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability on November 27, 2017. [https://www.flcra.gov/PublishedContent/Committees/2017-2018/ED/MeetingRecords/MeetingPacket\\_96.pdf](https://www.flcra.gov/PublishedContent/Committees/2017-2018/ED/MeetingRecords/MeetingPacket_96.pdf) (last visited 1/24/2018)

**B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:**

If passed, the proposal solidifies the purpose of civic literacy and the requirement for legislation. Florida already has several laws requiring civic literacy in public education. If this proposal passes, this would be the only subject content area specified in the constitution.

**C. FISCAL IMPACT:**

None.

**III. Additional Information:****A. Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the current version and the prior version of the proposal.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.

**C. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**D. Related Issues:**

None.