



The Civics Secures Democracy Act

Senators Chris Coons (DE) and John Cornyn (TX)

Section 1. Provides the bill the short title “Civics Secures Democracy Act.”

Section 2. Lays out the purposes of the bill. Includes a rule of construction against interpreting the bill to authorize the Secretary of Education to prescribe a civics and history curriculum.

TITLE 1—GRANT PROGRAM

Section 101. Defines certain terms, including “civics,” “eligible entities” (and related terms) for the grants under Title I, “evidence-based practices,” and includes cross references to existing ESEA and HEA definitions for other key terms.

Section 102. Authorizes the Secretary of Education to make grants under sections 103–07 (below) in three-year grant cycles, and specifies priorities for grants, with an emphasis on improving civics programs for underserved students and closing disparities in student outcomes.

Section 103. Authorizes grants to states to improve achievement in civics and history. Grants will be awarded on a formula basis proportional to states’ shares of funding under the Title I, part A formula in the prior fiscal year. Requires states to subgrant at least 95 percent of funds—on competitive or formula basis—to LEAs. Permits 5 percent state reservation for administration, monitoring, and evaluation costs. Includes supplement, not supplant requirement. Specifies content of state application for funds, including assurance that the state will participate in civics and history NAEP evaluations in grade 4, 8, and 12.

Section 104. Authorizes grants to nonprofit organizations to enhance student knowledge and achievement in civics and history in K-12. Grants will be made on a competitive basis to support the development or expansion of access to evidence-based curricula and other educational programs. Specifies contents of grant applications and prioritizes awards that incorporate evidence-based practices and address the needs of traditionally underserved students.

Section 105. Authorizes grants to institutions of higher education on a competitive basis to assist with the development and implementation of K–12 teacher training programs in civics and history. Specifies contents of grant applications and prioritizes awards that incorporate evidence-based practices and address needs of traditionally underserved students. Reserves 35 percent of funds appropriated to carry out the section for awards to HBCUs and MSIs.

Section 106. Authorizes grants to researchers on a competitive basis to evaluate K–12 students’ civics and history knowledge and effective instructional practices and educator professional development in civics and history. Specifies contents of grant applications and prioritizes awards to proposals that will benefit historically underserved communities.

TITLE II—AMENDMENTS TO OTHER LAWS

Section 201. Authorizes Prince Hall Civics Fellowship Program to be administered by the James Madison Fellowship Program for the purpose of diversifying the civics and history education workforce. Applicants would hold related credentials, including a valid teaching certification, and commit to five years of K–12 teaching. Priority would be given to applicants teaching in communities to which they have preexisting ties and from populations underrepresented in the civics and history education workforce, and the Foundation would award fellowships to applicants from states in proportion to states’ share of funding under the Title I, part A formula. Fellows would receive a \$5000 stipend for each year they complete their commitment.

Section 202. Requires the Commissioner for Education Statistics to administer NAEP civics and history assessments every two years in grades 4, 8, and 12.

Section 203. Reauthorizes and renames the existing HEA civics and history grant program as the “American civics and history education program.” Requires the Secretary to run competition at least once every three years. Ensures academic freedom by broadening range of civics and history content included in authorization. Expands eligible entities to include university-nonprofit partnerships. Requires partnership with school districts as to ensure better tools and information flows to K–12 students. Adds the development of open educational resources as allowable use of funds. Adds rule of construction against interpreting the section to authorize the Secretary of Education to prescribe an American political thought and history curriculum.

Section 204. Expands the Harry S. Truman Memorial Scholarship Trust Fund’s investment authorities to include all public debt securities of the United States with maturities suitable to the fund.

Section 205. Updates investment authorities for the James Madison memorial Fellowship Trust Fund, including by permitting the investment of funds in securities other than public debt securities of the United States that are traded in established U.S. markets.

Section 206. Updates the American History and Civics Education national activities grant program to require education on the history and principles of the Constitution, including the Bill of Rights; that is currently an eligible activity.

TITLE III—CIVICS SECURES DEMOCRACY FUND

Section 301. Creates a “Civics Secures Democracy Fund” in the Treasury, to be funded at up to \$1 billion annually for fiscal years 2022 through 2027 for the purposes of carrying out sections 103, 104, 105, 106, and 201 of this Act, as well as \$320,000,000 to recapitalize the Harry S. Truman Memorial Scholarship Foundation’s and James Madison Memorial Fellowship’s respective trusts so that, in combination with the new investment authorities provided under sections 204 and 205, those programs can sustain themselves without further annual appropriations. The Fund would be supported in the first instance using COVID relief funds for programs that have since expired.