

HOUSE BILL 2808
By Winningham

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4 and
Title 49, relative to civic education.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. The general assembly finds and declares that:

(1) Effective and responsible participation in political life as competent citizens requires the acquisition of a body of knowledge and of intellectual and participatory skills;

(2) Effective and responsible participation is furthered by development of certain dispositions or traits of character that enhance an individual's capacity to participate in the political process and contribute to the healthy functioning of the political system and improvement of society;

(3) Civic education encourages students to be thoughtful and productive members of their communities and future leaders of the state of Tennessee;

(4) It is essential to the future health of our republic that all citizens be knowledgeable about democratic principles and practices, be dedicated to the public good, be engaged members of their communities, and be involved participants in the public discourse;

(5) Individuals who have a clear and full understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a republic are more likely to exercise and defend those rights and responsibilities;

(6) Service learning and project-based civic learning have consistently been shown to engage pupils in learning, improve their attitudes toward school, and have positive effects on their civic skills, knowledge, and abilities;

(7) Providing civic education and promoting good citizenship should be core missions of Tennessee elementary and secondary schools; and

(8) Broad civic engagement is vital to the long-term social and political health of Tennessee.

SECTION 2. As used in this act, "civic education" means the provision of necessary education to each Tennessee schoolchild that includes the endowment of knowledge, as well as the development of skills and dispositions, necessary for informed, responsible participation in political life as competent citizens committed to the fundamental values and principles of the American republic.

SECTION 3.

(a) There is hereby established a commission that shall be known as the commission on civic education in Tennessee.

(b) The commission shall be composed of no fewer than thirteen (13) members, and shall be appointed as follows:

(1) No fewer than eight (8) members shall be appointed by the governor, who shall appoint at least one (1) member from each of the following:

(A) Tennessee Education Association;

(B) Tennessee Legal Community Foundation;

(C) Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy;

(D) Department of education;

(E) Tennessee Council on Social Studies;

(F) Tennessee Association of Elementary and Middle School

Principals; and

(G) Tennessee Association of Secondary School Principals.

(2) Two (2) members of the house of representatives, of whom not more than one (1) shall be from the same political party, shall be appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives;

(3) Two (2) members of the senate, of whom not more than one (1) shall be from the same political party, shall be appointed by the speaker of the senate; and

(4) One (1) member shall be the secretary of state or the secretary of state's designee.

(c) The members shall serve without pay, but may be compensated for travel expenses in accordance with the comprehensive travel regulations as promulgated by the department of finance and administration and approved by the attorney general and reporter.

(d) For administrative purposes, the commission shall be attached to the department of education.

SECTION 4.

(a) The commission is hereby directed to:

(1) Research the current policies and practices in civic education at the state and local level; and

(2) Recommend to the governor, the education committee of the senate and the education committee of the house of representatives any policies and programs it deems necessary and able to correct deficiencies in and improve the practice of civic education by Tennessee schools.

(b) The commission is authorized to appoint committees that may call witnesses for testimony concerning special and unique areas of concern and that shall report findings and recommendations to the full commission.

(c) All departments and agencies of state government shall fully cooperate with the commission to accomplish the goals of this act and, to that end, shall furnish such information, assistance and reports to, and shall otherwise cooperate with, the commission in the performance of its functions.

(d) The commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the governor, the education committee of the senate, and the education committee of the house of representatives no later than one (1) year following its first meeting.

SECTION 5. The commission shall be appointed and shall convene no more than six (6) months after the effective date of this act, and shall meet no fewer than four (4) times in the year thereafter. At its first meeting, the commission shall choose its officers. No business shall be conducted and agreed upon unless at least one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of the appointed membership is present.

SECTION 6. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.