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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE BILL

No. 1826 Session of  
2023

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INTRODUCED BY RABB, CEPEDA-FREYTIZ, HILL-EVANS, MAYES, MADDEN,  
SANCHEZ, DALEY, KRAJEWSKI AND CERRATO, NOVEMBER 8, 2023

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, NOVEMBER 8, 2023

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AN ACT

1 Amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), entitled "An  
2 act relating to the public school system, including certain  
3 provisions applicable as well to private and parochial  
4 schools; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the  
5 laws relating thereto," in terms and courses of study,  
6 further providing for subjects of instruction and flag code  
7 and providing for voting rights instruction; and, in high  
8 schools, further providing for assessment of civic knowledge  
9 and providing for voter registration efforts.

10 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
11 hereby enacts as follows:

12 Section 1. Section 1511 of the act of March 10, 1949  
13 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, is  
14 amended to read:

15 Section 1511. Subjects of Instruction; Flag Code.--In every  
16 elementary public and private school, established and maintained  
17 in this Commonwealth, the following subjects shall be taught, in  
18 the English language and from English texts: English, including  
19 spelling, reading and writing, arithmetic, geography, the  
20 history of the United States and of Pennsylvania, civics,  
21 including loyalty to the State and National Government, voting

1 rights, safety education, and the humane treatment of birds and  
2 animals, health, including physical education, and physiology,  
3 music and art. Other subjects shall be taught in the public  
4 elementary schools and also in the public high schools as may be  
5 prescribed by the standards of the State Board of Education. All  
6 such subjects, except foreign languages, shall be taught in the  
7 English language and from English texts: Provided, however,  
8 That, at the discretion of the [Superintendent of Public  
9 Instruction] Secretary of Education, the teaching of subjects in  
10 a language other than English may be permitted as part of a  
11 sequence in foreign language study or as part of a bilingual  
12 education program if the teaching personnel are properly  
13 certified in the subject fields. Each school district shall  
14 provide and distribute to each pupil, enrolled in the eighth  
15 grade of the public schools, one illustrated copy of the  
16 National Flag Code, and shall, from time to time, make available  
17 such copies as are necessary for replacements from year to year.  
18 It shall be the duty of each teacher in the public schools to  
19 make such use of the code as may, from time to time, seem  
20 proper.

21 Section 2. The act is amended by adding a section to read:

22 Section 1555. Voting Rights Instruction.--(a) The following  
23 apply to model curriculum:

24 (1) No later than twelve (12) months after the effective  
25 date of this paragraph, the Department of Education shall  
26 establish model curriculum for voting rights instruction.

27 (2) The model curriculum for voting rights instruction under  
28 paragraph (1) shall include the following:

29 (i) The history of voter suppression in the United States,  
30 including movements, laws and constitutional amendments that

1 have led to the expansion of voting rights.

2 (ii) Current laws and legislation that aim to impact an  
3 individual's ability to vote freely and safely.

4 (iii) Information on how to register to vote, including  
5 guided assistance and opportunities for in-class registration  
6 for students who are at least 18 years of age.

7 (iv) All of the available methods of voting in this  
8 Commonwealth.

9 (v) Information on critically researching candidates in  
10 elections and ballot measures through nonpartisan sources.

11 (b) Beginning with the school year that begins at least  
12 three (3) months after the Department of Education establishes  
13 model curriculum for voting rights instruction under subsection  
14 (a) and for each school year thereafter, each school entity  
15 shall incorporate voting rights instruction into the school  
16 entity's civics instruction.

17 Section 3. Section 1605.1(b) of the act is amended by adding  
18 a paragraph and the section is amended by adding a subsection to  
19 read:

20 Section 1605.1. Assessment of Civic Knowledge.--\* \* \*

21 (a.1) Beginning with the school year that begins at least  
22 eighteen (18) months after the effective date of this subsection  
23 and for each school year thereafter, each school entity shall:

24 (1) Require students in grade twelve to demonstrate civics  
25 competency through a civics capstone research project.

26 (2) Establish guidelines for the civics capstone research  
27 project required under paragraph (1), which shall include:

28 (i) Preliminary research into issues that impact students,  
29 their families and their communities.

30 (ii) Student choice as to which issue to research.

1 (iii) Research that explores the root causes of problems.

2 (iv) Research into current public policy.

3 (v) Research into multiple perspectives and political  
4 viewpoints.

5 (vi) Research into existing solutions proposed by  
6 governmental agencies and nongovernmental organizations.

7 (vii) Development of evidence-based arguments.

8 (viii) Development of an action plan to address the issue  
9 and public policy.

10 (ix) Authentic writing and speaking to address the issue and  
11 argue a position using evidence.

12 (x) Incorporation of the arts to express points of view on  
13 an issue.

14 (3) Award a State seal of civic knowledge to a student who  
15 successfully completes the civic competency capstone research  
16 project under paragraph (1), which shall affix to the student's  
17 diploma.

18 (b) The department shall:

19 \* \* \*

20 (5) Develop and issue to school entities a State seal of  
21 civic knowledge, which school entities are required to award to  
22 students in accordance with subsection (a.1)(3).

23 \* \* \*

24 Section 4. The act is amended by adding a section to read:

25 Section 1605.2. Voter Registration Efforts.--(a) A school  
26 entity may designate a faculty member to be responsible for  
27 voter registration efforts at a senior high school during each  
28 school year. The designated faculty member shall possess the  
29 qualifications listed under 25 Pa.C.S. § 1301 (relating to  
30 qualifications to register).

1 (b) A school entity designating a faculty member under  
2 subsection (a) shall:

3 (1) Ensure that voter registration efforts are nonpartisan  
4 in nature.

5 (2) Provide the designated faculty member with instructional  
6 materials concerning voter registration.

7 (c) A faculty member designated under subsection (a) shall  
8 nominate a student to aid in voter registration efforts during  
9 each school year. The student shall be at least sixteen years of  
10 age and enrolled in a school entity on a full-time basis.

11 (d) Definitions.--As used in this section, the following  
12 words and phrases shall have the meanings given to them in this  
13 subsection unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

14 "School entity" shall mean a school district, joint school  
15 district, private school, intermediate unit, area career and  
16 technical school, charter school, cyber charter school or  
17 regional charter school.

18 "Voter registration efforts" shall mean the distribution of  
19 instructional materials concerning voter registration,  
20 instructions for the submission of completed official voter  
21 registration applications and official voter registration  
22 applications to students or employees of a school entity  
23 possessing the qualifications listed under 25 Pa.C.S. § 1301.  
24 The term does not include the collection of completed voter  
25 registration applications by a designated faculty member or  
26 student nominee.

27 Section 5. This act shall take effect in 60 days.