

## CHAPTER 98

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**EDUCATION - PUBLIC SCHOOLS**


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**SENATE BILL 21-067**

BY SENATOR(S) Coram and Hansen, Priola, Bridges, Buckner, Fenberg, Fields, Ginal, Lee, Moreno, Pettersen, Winter, Garcia; also REPRESENTATIVE(S) McLachlan and Carver, Bacon, Bennett, Bird, Bockenfeld, Caraveo, Catlin, Cutter, Esgar, Exum, Gonzales-Gutierrez, Herod, Hooton, Jackson, Jodeh, Kipp, Lontine, Lynch, McCluskie, McCormick, Michaelson Jenet, Mullica, Ortiz, Ricks, Roberts, Sirota, Titone, Valdez D., Van Beber, Weissman, Young, Garnett.

**AN ACT****CONCERNING MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN CIVICS EDUCATION IN COLORADO.**

*Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

**SECTION 1. Short title.** The short title of this act is the "Senator Lois Court Civics Act of 2021".

**SECTION 2. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly finds that:

(a) The founders of the United States understood the importance of education in ensuring the effectiveness and continuation of the Constitutional Republic form of government they created. As Thomas Jefferson is often quoted as stating, "An educated citizenry is a vital requisite for our survival as a free people".

(b) To be active, knowledgeable participants in the republic, citizens must understand the mechanisms of the local, state, and federal governments that are available to them to address the issues and challenges of society and how to effectively participate in and influence these mechanisms;

(c) With the passage of federal laws requiring statewide assessments in English, mathematics, and science, there has been a demonstrable disinvestment in civics education. Schools and school districts have been pressured to focus their resources on teaching these spotlight subjects and have devoted fewer resources and significantly less time to teaching students the fundamentals of government at the federal, state, and local government levels, providing students fewer opportunities to engage in meaningful, project-based learning activities centered on civics education.

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*Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material added to existing law; dashes through words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law and such material is not part of the act.*

(d) This disinvestment has led to a significant erosion in the infrastructure in schools needed to support strong civics education programs. The results are borne out by students' scores on the most recent national civics assessment test. Less than a quarter of high school students achieved a grade of proficient; minority students from low-income households performed significantly worse on the test than their white, middle-class peers.

(e) There are also declines in the civic knowledge of the adult population of the United States. A 2016 survey found that only twenty-six percent of Americans can name all three branches of government.

(f) To reverse this trend, schools and school districts must be encouraged to review and reinvigorate their civics education curricula. Civics education must include not only classroom instruction and discussion of the fundamentals of the American republic at the federal, state, and local government levels, but it must also include classroom activities through which students model the constitutional republican process and engage in service learning and experiential project-based learning by participating civically in their communities.

(g) Thorough and effective instruction in civics must include:

(I) Civic knowledge, meaning an understanding of the history and heritage of the nation, civic life, and the functions of civic institutions;

(II) Civic skills, meaning the ability to analyze text and determine the reliability of sources and to gain an understanding of the ways in which civic institutions operate and how individuals may be involved in civic life;

(III) Civic dispositions, meaning values such as appreciating free speech and civil discourse and understanding perspectives that differ from one's own, as well as a disposition to be civically engaged; and

(IV) Civic behaviors, meaning civic and political habits and behaviors, including voting, engaging in deliberative discussions, volunteering, attending public meetings, and other activities related to civic life.

(2) The general assembly finds, therefore, that it is necessary to encourage more rigorous, thorough, and effective civics education.

**SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-1-104, **amend** (1) as follows:

**22-1-104. Teaching of history, culture, and civil government.** (1) (a) The history and civil government of the United States and of the state of Colorado, which includes the history, culture, and social contributions of minorities, including but not limited to American Indians, Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals within these minority groups, and the intersectionality of significant social and cultural features within these communities, and the contributions and persecution of religious minorities, must be taught in all the public schools of the state.

(b) IN ADDITION TO THE REQUIREMENTS SPECIFIED IN SUBSECTION (1)(a) OF THIS SECTION, COURSES FOR TEACHING THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND OF THE STATE OF COLORADO MUST INCLUDE INSTRUCTION ON:

(I) THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT AND HOW THEY INTERACT; AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW LAWS ARE ENACTED AT THE FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVELS; AND THE METHODS BY WHICH CITIZENS SHAPE AND INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNMENTAL ACTIONS;

(II) THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE STATE OF COLORADO USING FEDERAL AND STATE FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS AND THE SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE OF THOSE FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS IN MODERN SOCIETY. AT A MINIMUM, THIS INSTRUCTION MUST INCLUDE:

(A) THE HISTORICAL AND MODERN SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE;

(B) HOW THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION ESTABLISHES THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REPUBLIC THAT IT CREATES;

(C) HOW THE COLORADO CONSTITUTION ESTABLISHES THE STATE GOVERNMENT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE STATE;

(D) HOW THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION WITH THE BILL OF RIGHTS AND THE STATE BILL OF RIGHTS IN ARTICLE II OF THE STATE CONSTITUTION ARE APPLICABLE IN MODERN SOCIETY;

(E) HOW THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION IS AMENDED AND THE CHANGES THAT HAVE BEEN MADE TO IT SINCE 1787;

(F) HOW THE COLORADO CONSTITUTION IS AMENDED AND THE CHANGES THAT HAVE BEEN MADE TO IT SINCE 1876;

(G) HOW OTHER FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS OF THE UNITED STATES AND COLORADO, INCLUDING LANDMARK UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT DECISIONS AND SIGNIFICANT COLORADO SUPREME COURT DECISIONS, AIDED IN THE FORMATION AND HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY AFFECTED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND COLORADO GOVERNMENTS; AND

(H) HOW TO ENGAGE WITH FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND HOW TO ENGAGE WITH PUBLIC OFFICIALS.

(c) NOTWITHSTANDING THE REQUIREMENT IN SECTION 22-7-1005 (6) TO REVIEW THE PRESCHOOL THROUGH ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION STANDARDS EVERY SIX YEARS, AS SOON AS IS PRACTICABLE AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS SUBSECTION (1)(c), THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION SHALL REVIEW THE CIVICS PORTION OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS AND REVISE THEM AS NECESSARY TO COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SUBSECTION (1)(b) OF THIS SECTION. THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION SHALL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION ANY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HISTORY, CULTURE, SOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS, AND CIVIL GOVERNMENT IN EDUCATION COMMISSION ESTABLISHED IN SECTION 22-1-104.3 IN

REVIEWING THE CIVICS STANDARDS PURSUANT TO THIS SUBSECTION (1)(c).

(d) EACH PUBLIC SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DISTRICT IS ENCOURAGED TO PARTNER WITH LOCAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS TO SOLICIT DONATIONS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM THAT THE PUBLIC SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT PROVIDES. DONATIONS MAY BE USED TO PAY THE COST OF DEVELOPING A HIGH-QUALITY CURRICULUM, INVITING SPEAKERS TO INTERACT WITH STUDENTS, AND PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVICS LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM.

**SECTION 4. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in November 2022 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.

Approved: May 6, 2021