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HOUSE MEMORIAL 45

54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2019

INTRODUCED BY

Linda M. Trujillo

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TO FORM A TASK FORCE
TO REVIEW CIVICS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AND TO PROPOSE AN
IMPROVED CURRICULUM TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE
RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENSHIP.

WHEREAS, national polls have recorded historic lows in
popular trust for all three branches of the federal government;
and

WHEREAS, there is abundant evidence of a low level of
understanding of the United States constitution, the United
States' system of government and American history in general;
and

WHEREAS, the 2010 civics assessment of the national
assessment of educational progress of the national center for
education states that only twenty-seven percent of fourth

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1 graders, twenty-two percent of eighth graders and twenty-four
2 percent of twelfth graders achieved test results at or above
3 the proficient level in civics; and

4 WHEREAS, the national assessment of educational progress
5 civics assessment measures the civics knowledge, skills and
6 dispositions that are critical to the responsibilities of
7 citizenship in the constitutional democracy of the United
8 States; and

9 WHEREAS, the blueprint for the assessment recommends that
10 the assessment should be organized around three main
11 components: civic knowledge, intellectual and participatory
12 skills and civic dispositions; and

13 WHEREAS, the civic knowledge component draws heavily on
14 the national standards for civics and government and covers a
15 broad range of content that forms the basis for fundamental
16 understanding of civic life, politics and government; the
17 foundations of the American political system; government
18 established by the constitution to embody the purpose, values
19 and principles of American democracy; the relationship of the
20 United States to other nations and to world affairs; and the
21 roles of citizens in American democracy; and

22 WHEREAS, the intellectual skills component covers those
23 skills of mind and action that allow individuals to apply civic
24 knowledge to good effect by identifying, describing,
25 explaining, analyzing, evaluating, taking and defending

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1 positions; and

2 WHEREAS, the component of civic dispositions refers to the
3 traits of private and public character essential to the
4 preservation and improvement of the constitutional democracy of
5 the United States that include the following:

6 A. becoming an independent member of society;

7 B. assuming the personal, political and economic
8 responsibilities of a citizen;

9 C. respecting individual worth and human dignity;

10 D. participating in civic affairs in an informed,
11 thoughtful and effective manner; and

12 E. promoting the healthy functioning of the
13 constitutional democracy of the United States; and

14 WHEREAS, in recent years, civics education in schools
15 across the country has been on the decline; and

16 WHEREAS, prior to the 1960s, courses encouraging students
17 to explore their roles as citizens and discuss current issues
18 were common, while today such classes are rare; and

19 WHEREAS, civics education instead is typically rolled into
20 a course about the United States government with little time
21 devoted to exploring how students can participate in the
22 democratic process, according to a recent survey from the
23 national center for learning and civic engagement; and

24 WHEREAS, public trust in government is at only eighteen
25 percent, and voter participation has reached its lowest point

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1 since 1996; and

2 WHEREAS, without an understanding of the structure of
3 government and the rights, responsibilities and methods of
4 public engagement, civic illiteracy and voter apathy will
5 continue to plague American democracy; and

6 WHEREAS, educators and schools have a unique opportunity
7 and responsibility to ensure that young people become engaged
8 and knowledgeable citizens; and

9 WHEREAS, New Mexico social studies standards as part of
10 high school graduation requirements are already guided by New
11 Mexico statutes and administrative codes that call for
12 competence in the subject of social studies, but those
13 standards fall short of the knowledge and confidence required
14 to fulfill the vital functions of citizenry at this challenging
15 time for the state and country;

16 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
17 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that for the health
18 of democracy and to maintain a vibrant, active community that
19 will participate knowledgeably in government for the creation
20 and maintenance of a society that reflects the values of
21 equality, liberty and justice for all on which the nation was
22 founded, the public education department be requested to
23 convene a civics education task force to determine how to
24 improve civics curriculum in New Mexico schools; and

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the civics education task

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1 force be composed of the following members or the designees of
2 those members:

3 A. a representative of the public education
4 department appointed by the secretary of public education, to
5 serve as chair of the task force;

6 B. representatives from or experts on the three
7 branches of the government of New Mexico: the executive, the
8 legislative and the judicial;

9 C. representatives from or experts on the three
10 branches of the federal government;

11 D. legal experts focused on civics and
12 constitutional law;

13 E. ethics experts;

14 F. historians specializing in civic history;

15 G. teachers who have demonstrated innovative
16 methods of teaching civic engagement, such as mock trials and
17 mock elections;

18 H. county clerks and others involved in elections;
19 and

20 I. citizen organization leaders dedicated to
21 raising civic awareness and participation; and

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the civics education task
23 force seek the input of nationwide experts from institutions
24 such as the national assessment of educational progress, the
25 center for civic education, the national conference of state

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1 legislatures, the national center for state courts and other
2 local, state, county and municipal stakeholders; and

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the civics education task
4 force present a report of its activities and a draft of
5 proposed curriculum for elementary and secondary schools in New
6 Mexico that will address the need for more comprehensive and
7 effective civics education to the appropriate interim
8 legislative committee by November 1, 2019; and

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be
10 transmitted to the secretary of public education.