MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION 2003

By: Senator(s) Hewes, Gollott
To: Education

SENATE BILL NO. 2822

AN ACT TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI CIVIC LITERACY ACT; TO REQUIRE THE TEACHING OF THE NATION'S FOUNDING AND RELATED DOCUMENTS DURING THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS; TO PROVIDE THAT BEFORE RECEIVING A CERTIFICATE OR DIPLOMA OF GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL, STUDENTS MUST HAVE BEEN TESTED ON THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION AND THE FEDERALIST PAPERS; TO REQUIRE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO PROMULGATE RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THIS ACT; TO REQUIRE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO SUBMIT AN ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATURE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SUCH RULES AND REGULATIONS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. Title. This act may be cited as the Mississippi Civic Literacy Act.

SECTION 2. Findings. The Legislature finds and declares that:

(a) The adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the signing of the United States Constitution were principal events in the history of the United States, the Declaration of Independence providing the philosophical foundation on which this nation rests and the Constitution of the United States providing its structure of government;

(b) The Federalist Papers embody the most eloquent and forceful argument made in support of the adoption of our republican form of government;

(c) These documents stand as the foundation of our form of democracy, providing at the same time the basis of our national identity and the vehicle for orderly growth and change;

(d) Many Americans lack even the most basic knowledge and understanding of the history of our nation and the principles
set forth in the Declaration of Independence, codified in the Constitution and defended in the Federalist Papers; and

(e) The survival of the Republic requires that our nation's children, the future guardians of its heritage and participants in its governance, have a firm knowledge and understanding of its principles and history.

SECTION 3. Purpose. The purpose and intent of this act are:

(a) To require during the high school years the teaching of the nation's founding and related documents, which shall include the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and the Federalist Papers; and

(b) To require that before receiving a certificate or diploma of graduation from high school, students must have been tested on their knowledge of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and the Federalist Papers.

SECTION 4. Administration. The State Department of Education shall adopt and promulgate rules and regulations for the administration of this act. Such rules and regulations shall:

(a) Include among the requirements for secondary school graduation a passing grade on a test of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and the Federalist Papers;

(b) Include in any standard state testing of high school students questions on the contents of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and the Federalist Papers; and

(c) Specifically provide for curriculum content and teacher training to ensure that the intent of this legislation is satisfied.

SECTION 5. Reporting and accountability. The State Department of Education shall submit an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature describing the specific rules and regulations issued pursuant to this act and reporting the
effectiveness of these rules and regulations as measured by the passage of these courses involved pursuant to Section 3 of this act.

SECTION 6. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2003.