

By: Senator(s) Hewes

To: Education

SENATE BILL NO. 2154

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

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

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

16 **SECTION 2. Findings.** The Legislature finds and declares  
 17 that:

18 (a) The adoption of the Declaration of Independence in  
 19 1776 and the signing of the United States Constitution were  
 20 principal events in the history of the United States, the  
 21 Declaration of Independence providing the philosophical foundation  
 22 on which this nation rests and the Constitution of the United  
 23 States providing its structure of government;

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

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

30 (d) Many Americans lack even the most basic knowledge  
 31 and understanding of the history of our nation and the principles

32 set forth in the Declaration of Independence, codified in the  
33 Constitution and defended in the Federalist Papers; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

61 **SECTION 5. Reporting and accountability.** The State  
62 Department of Education shall submit an annual report to the  
63 Governor and the Legislature describing the specific rules and  
64 regulations issued pursuant to this act and reporting the

65 effectiveness of these rules and regulations as measured by the  
66 passage of these courses involved pursuant to Section 3 of this  
67 act.

68         **SECTION 6.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
69 and after July 1, 2006.