

By: Senator(s) McDaniel

To: Education;
Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2704

1 AN ACT TO REQUIRE STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOL TO EARN THE CIVIC
 2 LITERACY REQUIREMENT BEFORE ENROLLING IN A PUBLIC COMMUNITY
 3 COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY IN THIS STATE; TO AMEND THE CIVIC LITERACY
 4 REQUIREMENT FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION TO INCLUDE BOTH AN
 5 ASSESSMENT AND A COURSE OF INSTRUCTION; TO REQUIRE THE CHARACTER
 6 DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE 11TH AND
 7 12TH GRADES TO INCLUDE INSTRUCTIONS ON VOTING USING THE PRIMARY
 8 AND GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT; TO AMEND SECTIONS 37-13-181,
 9 37-13-183 AND 37-13-185, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, IN CONFORMITY;
 10 AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

12 **SECTION 1.** Beginning with students initially entering a
 13 Mississippi community college or state university in the 2023-2024
 14 school year and thereafter, each student must demonstrate
 15 competency in civic literacy by achieving a passing score on an
 16 assessment and by successfully completing a civic literacy course.
 17 The State Board of Education and the Board of Trustees of State
 18 Institutions of Higher Learning shall adopt by rule and
 19 regulation, respectively, approved assessments that address the
 20 competencies and courses that meet the civic literacy
 21 requirements. The Chair of the State Board of Education and the
 22 Chair of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher



23 Learning, or their respective designees, shall jointly appoint a
24 faculty committee to:

25 (a) Develop one or more course in civic literacy or
26 revise an existing general education core course in American
27 History or American Government to include, at a minimum,
28 opportunities to engage synchronously in political discussions and
29 civil debates with multiple points of view and to master the
30 ability to synthesize information that informs civic
31 decision-making.

32 (b) Establish course competencies and identify outcomes
33 that include, at a minimum, an understanding of the basic
34 principles of American democracy and how they are applied in our
35 republican form of government, an understanding of the United
36 States Constitution, knowledge of the founding documents and how
37 they have shaped the nature and functions of our institutions of
38 self-governance, and an understanding of landmark Supreme Court
39 cases and their impact on law and society.

40 **SECTION 2.** Section 37-13-181, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
41 amended as follows:

42 37-13-181. (1) The local school boards of the public school
43 districts, in their discretion, * * * shall develop and implement,
44 at the beginning of the * * * 2023-2024 school year, a
45 comprehensive program for character education in Grades K-12. The
46 definition of the character traits chosen by the school district
47 for implementation shall reflect and be in keeping with both the



48 spirit and the letter of the following founding documents: the
49 Mississippi Constitution of 1890; the Constitution of the United
50 States of America; the Declaration of Independence; and state and
51 federal law. A public school may not define or teach character or
52 character traits in any manner that might promote or encourage
53 students to participate in conduct that would violate any state or
54 federal law.

55 (2) Beginning with students entering a Mississippi community
56 college or university in the 2023-2024 school year, each student
57 shall demonstrate competency in civic literacy by achieving a
58 passing score on an assessment and by successfully completing a
59 civic literacy course as prescribed under Section 1 of this act.

60 **SECTION 3.** Section 37-13-183, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
61 amended as follows:

62 37-13-183. Assessment of the students' understanding of the
63 character traits chosen to be taught in public school shall be
64 limited to and must reflect the material taught in the classroom.
65 Students shall not be evaluated in any way as to whether or not
66 the students evidence a specific character trait in their own
67 lives. Provided, however, that the State Board of Education shall
68 direct each local school district to comply with the civic
69 literacy assessment and course requirements of Section 1 of this
70 act.

71 **SECTION 4.** Section 37-13-185, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
72 amended as follows:



73 37-13-185. (1) The State Board of Education shall review
74 the proposed character education programs of the individual school
75 districts to ascertain if the programs comply with the criteria
76 set forth in Section 37-13-181. Review of the programs shall not
77 exceed a time period of sixty (60) days. If a review extends
78 beyond this time period, the proposal will be deemed in compliance
79 with the law.

80 If the proposed character education program is rejected, the
81 State Board of Education shall set forth in writing the specific
82 areas of objection. These objections must be based on and limited
83 to the following criteria: the definition of the character traits
84 chosen by the school district for implementation shall reflect and
85 be in keeping with both the spirit and letter of our founding
86 documents; no instruction shall promote or encourage participation
87 in any conduct that would violate existing state or federal law;
88 and no student shall be assessed or evaluated as to whether or not
89 the student evidences a specific character trait in his or her own
90 life.

91 (2) Beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, the character
92 development curriculum for Grades 11 and 12 shall include
93 instruction on voting using the primary and general election
94 ballot.

95 **SECTION 5.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
96 and after July 1, 2022.

