

By: Senator(s) Hill

To: Universities and  
Colleges

SENATE BILL NO. 2490

1 AN ACT TO CREATE THE "REINFORCING COLLEGE EDUCATION ON  
 2 AMERICA'S CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE ACT" OR THE "REACH ACT"; TO  
 3 REQUIRE THAT EACH INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING MUST PROVIDE  
 4 INSTRUCTION CONCERNING THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION, THE  
 5 DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, THE FEDERALIST PAPERS, THE  
 6 EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION, ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S GETTYSBURG ADDRESS,  
 7 AND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'S LETTER FROM BIRMINGHAM JAIL TO  
 8 EACH UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT FOR THREE SEMESTER CREDIT HOURS; TO  
 9 CREATE EXCEPTIONS TO THE REQUIREMENT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

11 **SECTION 1.** (1) Each state institution of higher learning  
 12 must provide undergraduate students instruction concerning the  
 13 United States Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the  
 14 Federalist Papers, the Emancipation Proclamation, Abraham  
 15 Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and the Letter from Birmingham Jail  
 16 by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. No state institution of higher  
 17 learning may grant a diploma for a baccalaureate degree program to  
 18 a student unless the student successfully completes the  
 19 requirements described in subsection (2) of this section.

20 (2) Each state institution of higher learning must require  
 21 each undergraduate student, except a student eligible for the



22 exemption provided in subsection (3) of this section, to complete  
23 no fewer than three (3) credit hours in the subject of American  
24 government or American history. The American Government or  
25 American History course must, at a minimum, require each  
26 undergraduate student to:

27 (a) Read the United States Constitution in its  
28 entirety;

29 (b) Read the Declaration of Independence in its  
30 entirety;

31 (c) Read the Emancipation Proclamation in its entirety;

32 (d) Read a minimum of five (5) essays in their entirety  
33 from the Federalist Papers as selected by the course instructor;

34 (e) Read Lincoln's Gettysburg Address in its entirety;

35 (f) Read the Letter from Birmingham Jail by Dr. Martin  
36 Luther King, Jr., in its entirety; and

37 (g) Pass a cumulative final examination at the  
38 conclusion of the course, testing for student proficiency in the  
39 provisions and principles of the United States Constitution, the  
40 Declaration of Independence, the Federalist Papers, the  
41 Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and the  
42 Letter from Birmingham Jail by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

43 (3) A state institution of higher learning may exempt a  
44 student from the requirements of subsection (2) of this section  
45 who has successfully completed three (3) credit hours, or the  
46 equivalent, as follows:



47           (a) In an Advanced Placement course in the subject of  
48 American government or American history if the Advanced Placement  
49 course satisfies the requirements of subsection (2) of this  
50 section;

51           (b) In a dual-enrollment course in the subject of  
52 American government or American history, if the dual-enrollment  
53 course satisfies the requirements of subsection (2) of this  
54 section;

55           (c) In an associate degree program in a community or  
56 junior college if the completed three (3) credit hours, or their  
57 equivalent, in the associate degree program satisfies the  
58 requirements of subsection (2) of this section; or

59           (d) In an International Baccalaureate (IB) course in  
60 the subject of American government or American history, if the  
61 International Baccalaureate course satisfies the requirements of  
62 subsection (2) of this section.

63           (4) Each state institution of higher learning must ensure  
64 that the requirements of this subsection (2) of this section are  
65 incorporated into the degree requirements of all baccalaureate  
66 degree programs in a manner that does not add to the total number  
67 of credit hours for any baccalaureate degree program.

68           (5) The Board of Trustees of the Institutions of Higher  
69 Learning must ensure the compliance of each state institution of  
70 higher learning with all the provisions of this section. The  
71 board annually must collect information and compile it into a



72 report on the compliance status of each institution of higher  
73 learning. The report must contain copies of all syllabi from each  
74 section of each course that any institution of higher learning  
75 allows to fulfill the course requirements of subsection (2) of  
76 this section. This report must be submitted annually to the  
77 chairpersons of the following legislative committees: The Senate  
78 Appropriations Committee; the House of Representatives Ways and  
79 Means Committee; the Senate Universities and Colleges Committee;  
80 and the House of Representatives Universities and Colleges  
81 Committee.

82 **SECTION 2.** This act applies to all freshman classes enrolled  
83 in baccalaureate degree programs after the effective date of this  
84 act. Nothing in this act shall be construed to prevent an  
85 undergraduate student enrolled in a state institution of higher  
86 learning on or before the effective date of this act from  
87 receiving a diploma.

88 **SECTION 3.** If any state institution of higher learning fails  
89 to enforce the provisions of this act for more than one (1)  
90 academic year, the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of  
91 Higher Learning shall remove the head of that institution from his  
92 or her position.

93 **SECTION 4.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
94 and after July 1, 2024, and shall apply to only freshman classes  
95 entering for the 2024-2025 school year and all subsequent freshman  
96 classes.

