

**House File 2544 - Introduced**

HOUSE FILE 2544  
BY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

(SUCCESSOR TO HF 2330)

**A BILL FOR**

1 An Act relating to education, including by modifying provisions  
2 related to the social studies instruction provided to  
3 students enrolled in grades one through twelve and the  
4 educational programs provided by the institutions of higher  
5 education under the control of the state board of regents.  
6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. Section 256.11, subsections 3 and 4, Code 2024,  
2 are amended to read as follows:

3 3. a. The following areas shall be taught in grades  
4 one through six: English-language arts, social studies,  
5 mathematics, science, health, physical education, traffic  
6 safety, music, visual art, and, subject to [section 279.80](#),  
7 age-appropriate and research-based human growth and  
8 development. Computer science instruction incorporating  
9 the standards established under section 256.7, subsection  
10 26, paragraph "a", subparagraph (4), shall be offered in  
11 at least one grade level commencing with the school year  
12 beginning July 1, 2023. The health curriculum shall include  
13 the characteristics of communicable diseases. The state board  
14 as part of accreditation standards shall adopt curriculum  
15 definitions for implementing the elementary program.

16 b. The social studies curriculum shall include instruction  
17 related to all of the following:

18 (1) The workings of the federal, state, and local levels of  
19 government.

20 (2) The rights and responsibilities of citizens of the  
21 United States and the state of Iowa.

22 (3) The history of the secular and religious ideals and  
23 institutions of liberty, including political, religious,  
24 economic, social, and cultural liberty, in western  
25 civilization, the United States, and the state of Iowa, which  
26 emphasizes the good, worthwhile, and best achievements of these  
27 ideals and institutions of liberty.

28 (4) Exemplary figures in western civilization, the United  
29 States, and the state of Iowa who have fought to secure  
30 liberty.

31 (5) The cultural heritage of western civilization, the  
32 United States, and the state of Iowa.

33 (6) The geography of the United States and the state of  
34 Iowa.

35 (7) The history and meaning of the United States flag and

1 the national anthem.

2 (8) Admirable Americans, including Benjamin Franklin,  
3 George Washington, Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Cady Stanton,  
4 and Abraham Lincoln.

5 c. During grades five and six, the instruction provided as  
6 part of the social studies curriculum shall incorporate the  
7 study of documents that are important to the history of the  
8 United States, including all of the following:

9 (1) The Mayflower compact.

10 (2) Common Sense, written by Thomas Paine.

11 (3) The Declaration of Independence.

12 (4) The Articles of Confederation.

13 (5) The Pennsylvania Act for the gradual abolition of  
14 slavery.

15 (6) The Virginia statute for religious freedom.

16 (7) The northwest ordinance.

17 (8) The Constitution of the United States.

18 (9) The federalist papers, including federalist number ten  
19 and federalist number fifty-one.

20 (10) A transcript of George Washington's farewell address.

21 (11) Relevant excerpts from Democracy in America written by  
22 Alexis de Tocqueville.

23 (12) A transcript of the first debate between Abraham  
24 Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas.

25 (13) The Emancipation Proclamation.

26 (14) The writings of the founding fathers.

27 4. a. The following shall be taught in grades seven and  
28 eight: English-language arts; social studies; mathematics;  
29 science; health; age-appropriate and research-based human  
30 growth and development; career exploration and development;  
31 physical education; music; and visual art. Computer science  
32 instruction incorporating the standards established under  
33 section 256.7, subsection 26, paragraph "a", subparagraph (4),  
34 shall be offered in at least one grade level commencing with  
35 the school year beginning July 1, 2023. Career exploration

1 and development shall be designed so that students are  
2 appropriately prepared to create an individual career  
3 and academic plan pursuant to [section 279.61](#), incorporate  
4 foundational career and technical education concepts aligned  
5 with the six career and technical education service areas as  
6 defined in [subsection 5](#), paragraph "h", incorporate relevant  
7 twenty-first century skills to facilitate career readiness,  
8 and introduce students to career opportunities within the  
9 local community and across this state. The health curriculum  
10 shall include age-appropriate and research-based information  
11 regarding the characteristics of sexually transmitted diseases.  
12 The state board as part of accreditation standards shall adopt  
13 curriculum definitions for implementing the program in grades  
14 seven and eight. However, [this subsection](#) shall not apply to  
15 the teaching of career exploration and development in nonpublic  
16 schools.

17 b. (1) The social studies curriculum shall require at  
18 least one semester of instruction, or the trimester or quarter  
19 equivalent, in each of the following areas:

20 (a) Civics, which shall include instruction related to all  
21 of the following:

22 (i) The intellectual sources of the United States' founding  
23 documents.

24 (ii) The political and military narrative of the causes and  
25 progress of the American Revolution.

26 (iii) The United States' founding documents and the  
27 original intent of such documents.

28 (iv) The Constitution of the United States, with emphasis on  
29 the Bill of Rights, and the Constitution of the State of Iowa.

30 (v) The basic principles of the United States' republican  
31 form of government.

32 (vi) The historical development of the United States'  
33 republican form of government.

34 (vii) The United States' republican form of government  
35 compared with different forms of government including

1 dictatorship, monarchy, oligarchy, theocracy, communism, and  
2 autocracy.

3 (viii) The structure, function, and processes of government  
4 institutions at the federal, state, and local levels.

5 (ix) The civic virtues exemplified in the lives of famous  
6 Americans.

7 (b) United States history, which shall include instruction  
8 related to all of the following:

9 (i) The study of and devotion to the United States'  
10 exceptional and praiseworthy history.

11 (ii) The basic political, diplomatic, and military  
12 history of the United States, which shall include the period  
13 of discovery, early colonies, the War of Independence, the  
14 Civil War, the expansion of the United States to its present  
15 boundaries, World War I, World War II, the Cold War, the civil  
16 rights movement, and the period of time from the September 11  
17 attacks to the present day, which shall incorporate the study  
18 of primary source documents.

19 (iii) The basic history of business and technology in the  
20 United States, which shall incorporate the study of primary  
21 source documents.

22 (iv) The basic history of the religious and secular aspects  
23 of the United States' common culture, which shall incorporate  
24 the study of primary source documents.

25 (v) The concept that United States history shall be viewed  
26 as factual, not as constructed, shall be viewed as knowable,  
27 teachable, and testable, and shall be defined as the creation  
28 of a new nation based largely on the universal principles  
29 stated in the Declaration of Independence.

30 (c) The history of western civilization, which shall  
31 include instruction that constitutes an extended, coherent  
32 account of western civilization, from Athens, Jerusalem, and  
33 Rome to the present day, to understand the nature of the  
34 nation's ideals and institutions of liberty, how such ideals  
35 and institutions of liberty came into existence, and what

1 actions the nation's forefathers took to preserve them.

2 (d) Iowa history, to be taught during grade eight, which  
3 shall include instruction related to all of the following:

4 (i) The history of the founding of Iowa.

5 (ii) The history of famous Iowans and their involvement in  
6 important events in history.

7 (iii) How Iowans have impacted government, policies,  
8 issues, and procedures over the years.

9 (iv) The history of the state motto, bird, tree, and rock.

10 (e) Economics, to be taught during grade eight. The  
11 economics instruction shall focus on the free enterprise system  
12 and its benefits. The economics curriculum shall include  
13 instruction related to the failures of economic systems of  
14 communist regimes and the difference between capitalist and  
15 communist economic systems.

16 (2) The social studies curriculum shall include instruction  
17 related to admirable Americans, including Benjamin Franklin,  
18 George Washington, Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Cady Stanton,  
19 and Abraham Lincoln.

20 (3) The instruction provided as part of the social studies  
21 curriculum shall incorporate the study of documents that are  
22 important to the history of the United States, including all  
23 of the following:

24 (a) The Mayflower compact.

25 (b) Common Sense, written by Thomas Paine.

26 (c) The Declaration of Independence.

27 (d) The Articles of Confederation.

28 (e) The Pennsylvania Act for the gradual abolition of  
29 slavery.

30 (f) The Virginia statute for religious freedom.

31 (g) The northwest ordinance.

32 (h) The Constitution of the United States.

33 (i) The federalist papers, including federalist number ten  
34 and federalist number fifty-one.

35 (j) A transcript of George Washington's farewell address.

1 (k) Relevant excerpts from Democracy in America written by  
2 Alexis de Tocqueville.

3 (l) A transcript of the first debate between Abraham Lincoln  
4 and Stephen A. Douglas.

5 (m) The Emancipation Proclamation.

6 (n) The writings of the founding fathers.

7 Sec. 2. Section 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph b, Code  
8 2024, is amended to read as follows:

9 b. Five units of the social studies including instruction  
10 in voting statutes and procedures, voter registration  
11 requirements, the use of paper ballots and voting systems in  
12 the election process, and the method of acquiring and casting  
13 an absentee ballot. All students shall complete a minimum of  
14 one-half unit of United States government, and one unit of  
15 civics, two units of United States history, and one unit of  
16 western civilization. The social studies curriculum shall not  
17 include any advanced placement course that requires action  
18 civics. The social studies curriculum shall incorporate the  
19 study of documents that are important to the history of the  
20 United States, including the Mayflower compact; Common Sense,  
21 written by Thomas Paine; the Declaration of Independence; the  
22 Articles of Confederation; the Pennsylvania Act for the gradual  
23 abolition of slavery; the Virginia statute for religious  
24 freedom; the northwest ordinance; the Constitution of the  
25 United States; the federalist papers, including federalist  
26 number ten and federalist number fifty-one; a transcript of  
27 George Washington's farewell address; relevant excerpts from  
28 Democracy in America written by Alexis de Tocqueville; a  
29 transcript of the first debate between Abraham Lincoln and  
30 Stephen A. Douglas; the Emancipation Proclamation; and the  
31 writings of the founding fathers.

32 (1) The one-half unit of United States government shall  
33 include the voting procedure as described in this lettered  
34 paragraph and section 280.9A and other instruction related  
35 to voting statutes and procedures, voter registration

1 requirements, the use of paper ballots and voting systems in  
2 the election process, and the method of acquiring and casting  
3 an absentee ballot. The government instruction shall also  
4 include a study of the Constitution of the United States  
5 and the Bill of Rights contained in the Constitution and an  
6 assessment of a student's knowledge of the Constitution and the  
7 Bill of Rights.

8     (2) The one unit of civics shall include a culminating  
9 civic literacy examination that was not developed by the  
10 school district or accredited nonpublic school or the teacher  
11 providing the civics instruction. The examination shall  
12 include an assessment of the student's knowledge of United  
13 States government and United States history, shall provide a  
14 means of assessing civics instruction in grades nine through  
15 twelve, and shall provide information that colleges and  
16 universities may use to determine if incoming students possess  
17 sufficient civic literacy. The one unit of civics shall not  
18 include any requirements related to political activism, service  
19 learning, civic engagement, action civics, or any cognate  
20 activity. The one unit of civics shall include instruction  
21 related to all of the following:

22     (a) The intellectual sources of the United States'  
23 founding documents, including documents that illustrate the  
24 Greek, Hebrew, and Roman exemplars of liberty and republican  
25 government; the Christian synthesis of Greek, Hebrew, and Roman  
26 thought that emphasized the equal dignity of all individual  
27 humans in the eyes of God; the medieval English inheritance  
28 of common law, jury, local self-government, liberty, and  
29 representative government; the early modern English inheritance  
30 of Christian liberty, republicanism, the militia, accountable  
31 government, mixed government, parliamentary sovereignty,  
32 freedom of the press, and the English bill of rights and  
33 toleration Act; the colonial American inheritance of Christian  
34 liberty, self-government, and local government; and the  
35 enlightenment theories of John Locke, Montesquieu, Adam Smith,

1 and their contemporaries that universalized the European  
2 traditions of liberty.

3 (b) The political and military narrative of the causes and  
4 progress of the American revolution.

5 (c) The original intent of the documents described in  
6 unnumbered paragraph 1.

7 (d) The Constitution of the United States, with an emphasis  
8 on the Bill of Rights contained in the Constitution, and the  
9 Constitution of the State of Iowa.

10 (e) The basic principles of the United States' republican  
11 form of government and the institutions and principles to  
12 preserve liberty and prevent misuse of government power,  
13 including balance of power; consent of the governed; the  
14 electoral college; federalism and the division of powers  
15 between the federal government and the states; individual  
16 liberties; rights of life, liberty, and property; popular  
17 sovereignty; religious freedom; an educated citizenry;  
18 representative government; civilian control of the military;  
19 rule of law; control of faction; checks and balances; and  
20 separation of powers among the executive, the legislature, and  
21 the judiciary.

22 (f) The historical development of the United States'  
23 republican form of government, including the federalist and  
24 antifederalist debates; the rise and role of political parties;  
25 the rise of Jacksonian democracy; the expansion of the ideals  
26 and institutions of liberty and republican self-government  
27 to include all Americans, regardless of sex or race; the  
28 causes and the constitutional consequences of the Civil War;  
29 the thirteenth amendment, fourteenth amendment, fifteenth  
30 amendment, and the nineteenth amendment; the rise of the new  
31 deal administrative state; and United States Supreme Court  
32 cases, including Marbury v. Madison, McCulloch v. Maryland,  
33 Dred Scott v. Sandford, Pembina consolidated silver mining co.  
34 v. Pennsylvania, Plessy v. Ferguson, and Brown v. Board of  
35 Education.

1     (g) The United States' republican form of government  
2 compared with different forms of government including  
3 dictatorship, monarchy, oligarchy, theocracy, communism, and  
4 autocracy.

5     (h) The structure, function, and processes of governmental  
6 institutions at the federal, state, and local levels.

7     (i) Civic virtues exemplified in the lives of famous  
8 Americans, including George Washington, Benjamin Franklin,  
9 Alexander Hamilton, Abigail Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew  
10 Jackson, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, Abraham Lincoln,  
11 Ulysses S. Grant, Ely Parker, Thomas Edison, Andrew Carnegie,  
12 Walter Reed, Theodore Roosevelt, Charles Curtis, Will Rogers,  
13 Jim Thorpe, Jackie Robinson, George Marshall, Martin Luther  
14 King, Jr., Richard Feynman, Neil Armstrong, and Ronald Reagan.

15     (3) The two units of United States history shall include an  
16 assessment of the student's knowledge of important historical  
17 documents, including the Declaration of Independence,  
18 the Constitution of the United States, the Emancipation  
19 Proclamation, and excerpts from the federalist papers. One  
20 unit of United States history shall focus on the period  
21 of time beginning when the Mayflower landed on Cape Cod to  
22 the conclusion of the Civil War. The other unit of United  
23 States history shall focus on the period of time beginning  
24 at the conclusion of the Civil War to the present day, which  
25 unit shall include instruction related to the Holocaust and  
26 crimes against humanity that have occurred under communist  
27 regimes. The two units of United States history shall include  
28 significant material related to the War of Independence and  
29 the creation of the Constitution of the United States. The  
30 two units of United States history shall be designed to  
31 include significant biographical material related to exemplary  
32 Americans to provide both the nation's shared constitutional  
33 history and historical context. The two units of United  
34 States history shall include instruction related to all of the  
35 following:

1     (a) The United States' exceptional and praiseworthy  
2 history.

3     (b) The basic political, diplomatic, and military history  
4 of the United States, which shall include the period of  
5 discovery, early colonies, the War of Independence, the  
6 Civil War, the expansion of the United States to its present  
7 boundaries, World War I, World War II, the Cold War, the civil  
8 rights movement, and the period of time from the September 11  
9 attacks to the present day, which shall incorporate the study  
10 of primary source documents.

11     (c) The basic history of business and technology in the  
12 United States, which shall incorporate the study of primary  
13 source documents.

14     (d) The basic history of the religious and secular aspects  
15 of the United States' common culture, which shall incorporate  
16 the study of primary source documents.

17     (e) The concept that United States history shall be viewed  
18 as factual, not as constructed, shall be viewed as knowable,  
19 teachable, and testable, and shall be defined as the creation  
20 of a new nation based largely on the universal principles  
21 stated in the Declaration of Independence.

22     (4) The one unit of western civilization shall include  
23 instruction related to all of the following:

24     (a) Western civilization's exceptional and praiseworthy  
25 history.

26     (b) The basic political outline of western civilization,  
27 which shall include the history of ancient Israel, the free  
28 Greek city states, the Roman republic, the Roman empire, the  
29 Carolingian empire, the medieval Papacy, medieval England,  
30 absolutist France, parliamentary England, the Napoleonic  
31 wars, World War I, World War II, the communist and fascist  
32 challenges to the European order, and the survival and triumph  
33 of political and economic liberty, which shall incorporate the  
34 study of primary source documents.

35     (c) The basic intellectual history of western civilization,

1 which shall include its Greek, Hebrew, and Roman sources;  
2 the Christian synthesis of those Greek, Hebrew, and Roman  
3 sources that emphasized the equal dignity of all individual  
4 humans in the eyes of God; the renaissance rediscovery of  
5 republican liberty; the reformation; the medieval and early  
6 modern English ideals and institutions of common law, jury,  
7 the militia, local self-government, political and religious  
8 liberty, representative government, accountable government,  
9 and parliamentary sovereignty; the scientific revolution;  
10 the enlightenment ideals of political and economic liberty;  
11 the nineteenth-century formulation of the scientific and  
12 humanist disciplines; the emergence of modern conservatism and  
13 liberalism; and the challenges to liberty of socialism and  
14 fascism, which shall incorporate the study of primary source  
15 documents.

16 (d) The basic history of science and technology in western  
17 civilization, which shall emphasize Europe's unique role as the  
18 matrix of the modern scientific and industrial world, which  
19 shall incorporate the study of primary source documents.

20 (e) The basic economic history of western civilization,  
21 which shall emphasize Europe's unique role as the matrix of  
22 modern mass prosperity, which emerged from the interplay  
23 of the ideals and institutions of economic liberty, secure  
24 property rights, entrepreneurial innovation, and the industrial  
25 revolution, which shall incorporate the study of primary source  
26 documents.

27 (f) The basic history of the religious and secular aspects  
28 of western civilization's cultures, which shall emphasize the  
29 protective aspects of liberty and incorporate the study of  
30 primary source documents.

31 (g) The basic history of the fruitful and enduring  
32 attachment of western civilization's free peoples to their  
33 nations and faiths, which shall incorporate the study of  
34 primary source documents.

35 (h) The concept that western civilization's history shall

1 be viewed as factual, not as constructed, shall be viewed as  
2 knowable, teachable, and testable, and shall be defined as the  
3 creation of a civilization based largely on the ideals and  
4 institutions of liberty.

5 Sec. 3. Section 256E.7, subsection 2, paragraph g, Code  
6 2024, is amended to read as follows:

7 *g.* Be subject to and comply with the requirements of section  
8 256.7, subsection 21, and the educational standards of section  
9 256.11, unless specifically waived by the state board during  
10 the application process; provided, however, that the state  
11 board shall not waive the educational standards related to  
12 social studies instruction established in section 256.11,  
13 subsections 3 and 4, and in section 256.11, subsection 5,  
14 paragraph "b".

15 Sec. 4. Section 256F.4, subsection 2, Code 2024, is amended  
16 by adding the following new paragraph:

17 NEW PARAGRAPH. *p.* Be subject to and comply with the  
18 requirements of section 256.11, subsections 3 and 4, and  
19 section 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph "b", relating to  
20 educational standards related to social studies instruction in  
21 the same manner as a school district.

22 Sec. 5. Section 262.9, Code 2024, is amended by adding the  
23 following new subsections:

24 NEW SUBSECTION. 39. *a.* (1) Direct the institutions of  
25 higher education under its control to adopt policies that  
26 require all students admitted to the baccalaureate degree  
27 program provided by the institution to take a civic literacy  
28 examination.

29 (2) Subparagraph (1) shall not apply to a student who has  
30 taken and passed the civic literacy examination described in  
31 section 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph "b", subparagraph (2).

32 *b.* If a student does not pass the civic literacy examination  
33 described in paragraph "a", the institution shall require  
34 the student to take a remedial civics course. The remedial  
35 civics course shall include a culminating civic literacy

1 examination. The remedial civics course shall not contain any  
2 requirements related to political activism, service learning,  
3 civic engagement, action civics, or any cognate activity.

4 c. If a student does not pass the civic literacy examination  
5 described in paragraph "b", the student shall be allowed to  
6 retake the examination as many times as is necessary for the  
7 student to pass the examination; provided, however, that the  
8 student shall not be allowed to graduate from the institution,  
9 or progress to more advanced civics courses, until the student  
10 passes the examination.

11 NEW SUBSECTION. 40. Prohibit the institutions of higher  
12 education under its control from awarding students any semester  
13 hours of credit for courses that require action civics or  
14 political activism.

15 Sec. 6. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACT. Section 25B.2, subsection  
16 3, shall not apply to this Act.

17 Sec. 7. NO IMPACT ON GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS. The section  
18 of this Act amending section 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph  
19 "b", shall not affect the graduation requirements applicable  
20 to a student enrolled in grades nine through twelve as of the  
21 effective date of this Act.

22 EXPLANATION

23 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with  
24 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

25 This bill relates to education by modifying provisions  
26 related to the social studies instruction provided to students  
27 enrolled in grades 1 through 12 and the educational programs  
28 provided by the institutions of higher education under the  
29 control of the state board of regents.

30 The bill provides that the social studies curriculum  
31 provided to students enrolled in grades one through six  
32 in school districts, accredited nonpublic schools, charter  
33 schools, and innovation zone schools shall include instruction  
34 related to the workings of the federal, state, and local levels  
35 of government; the rights and responsibilities of citizens

1 of the United States and the state of Iowa; the history of  
2 the secular and religious ideals and institutions of liberty;  
3 exemplary figures in western civilization, the United States,  
4 and the state of Iowa; the cultural heritage of western  
5 civilization, the United States, and the state of Iowa; the  
6 geography of the United States and the state of Iowa; the  
7 history and meaning of the United States flag and the national  
8 anthem, and certain specified admirable Americans.

9     The bill makes similar changes to the social studies  
10 curriculum provided to students enrolled in grades 7 through  
11 12, but adds instructional requirements related to the study  
12 of prominent persons and prominent writings. The bill also  
13 provides that the social studies curriculum provided in  
14 grades seven and eight is to include at least one semester of  
15 instruction, or the trimester or quarter equivalent, in civics,  
16 United States history, the history of western civilization,  
17 Iowa history, and economics. The bill establishes what such  
18 instruction is to include.

19     Current law requires school districts, accredited nonpublic  
20 schools, and charter schools to offer and teach five units  
21 of social studies in grades 9 through 12, which includes a  
22 minimum of one-half unit of United States government and  
23 one unit of United States history. The bill requires all  
24 students to complete a minimum of one-half unit of United  
25 States government, one unit of civics, two units of United  
26 States history, and one unit of western civilization. The  
27 bill establishes prohibitions and requirements related to this  
28 instruction, including required examinations and topics of  
29 instruction and prohibitions related to including forms of  
30 political activism in civics instruction. The bill provides  
31 that the social studies curriculum is required to incorporate  
32 the study of certain specified documents that are important  
33 to the history of the United States. The bill provides that  
34 these changes shall not affect the graduation requirements  
35 applicable to a student enrolled in grades 9 through 12 as of

1 the effective date of the bill.

2 The bill requires the state board of regents to direct  
3 the institutions of higher education under its control to  
4 adopt policies that require all students admitted to the  
5 baccalaureate degree program provided by the institution to  
6 take a civic literacy examination. The bill provides that,  
7 if a student does not pass the examination, the institution  
8 shall require the student to take a remedial civics course  
9 that contains a culminating civic literacy examination. If  
10 the student fails to pass this examination as well, the bill  
11 provides that the student may retake the examination, but the  
12 student will not be allowed to graduate from the institution,  
13 or progress to more advanced civics courses, until the student  
14 passes the examination.

15 The bill requires the state board of regents to prohibit  
16 the institutions of higher education under its control from  
17 awarding students any semester hours of credit for courses that  
18 require action civics or political activism.

19 The bill may include a state mandate as defined in Code  
20 section 25B.3. The bill makes inapplicable Code section  
21 25B.2, subsection 3, which would relieve a school district  
22 from complying with a state mandate if funding for the cost of  
23 the state mandate is not provided or specified. Therefore,  
24 school districts are required to comply with any state mandate  
25 included in the bill.