

House File 402 - Introduced

HOUSE FILE 402
BY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

(SUCCESSOR TO HSB 56)

A BILL FOR

1 An Act establishing completion of a course on American history
2 and civil government as a requirement for the completion of a
3 baccalaureate degree program at a public institution of higher
4 education.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

unofficial

1 Section 1. SHORT TITLE. This Act shall be known and may be
2 cited as the "Increasing Civics Proficiency in Higher Education
3 Act".

4 Sec. 2. NEW SECTION. **261K.1 Definitions.**

5 As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise
6 requires:

7 1. "*Basic principles of the United States' republican form of*
8 *government*" means institutions and principles to preserve liberty
9 and prevent misuse of government power, including balance of
10 power; consent of the governed; the electoral college; federalism
11 and the division of powers between the federal government and
12 the states; individual liberties; rights of life, liberty, and
13 property; popular sovereignty; religious freedom; an educated
14 citizenry; representative government; civilian control of the
15 military; rule of law; control of faction; checks and balances;
16 and separation of powers among the executive, the legislature,
17 and the judiciary.

18 2. "*Founding documents*" means texts including the Mayflower
19 compact; Common Sense, written by Thomas Paine; the Declaration
20 of Independence; the Articles of Confederation; the Pennsylvania
21 Act for the gradual abolition of slavery; the Virginia statute
22 for religious freedom; the northwest ordinance; the Constitution
23 of the United States; the federalist papers, including federalist
24 number ten and federalist number fifty-one; a transcript of
25 George Washington's farewell address; relevant excerpts from
26 Democracy in America written by Alexis de Tocqueville; a
27 transcript of the first debate between Abraham Lincoln and
28 Stephen A. Douglas; the Emancipation Proclamation; and the
29 writings of the founding fathers of the United States.

30 3. "*Historical development of the United States' republican*
31 *form of government*" means events including the federalist and
32 antifederalist debates; the rise and role of political parties;
33 the rise of Jacksonian democracy; the expansion of the ideals
34 and institutions of liberty and republican self-government to
35 include all Americans, regardless of sex or race; the causes and

1 the constitutional consequences of the Civil War; the thirteenth
2 amendment, fourteenth amendment, fifteenth amendment, and the
3 nineteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States;
4 the rise of the new deal administrative state; and United States
5 supreme court cases, including Marbury v. Madison, McCulloch
6 v. Maryland, Dred Scott v. Sandford, Pembina consolidated
7 silver mining co. v. Pennsylvania, Plessy v. Ferguson, and Brown
8 v. Board of Education.

9 4. "Public institution of higher education" means either of
10 the following:

11 a. An institution of higher learning governed by the state
12 board of regents.

13 b. A community college with respect to any baccalaureate
14 degree program offered by the community college and to any
15 student enrolled in such a program.

16 Sec. 3. NEW SECTION. **261K.2 American history and civil**
17 **government course required.**

18 Beginning with the academic year commencing in 2027, a public
19 institution of higher education shall establish as a requirement
20 for the completion of any baccalaureate degree program that a
21 student complete a survey course in American history and civil
22 government as provided in this chapter.

23 Sec. 4. NEW SECTION. **261K.3 Course content.**

24 1. The course shall instruct students in subjects including
25 but not limited to the following:

26 a. The study of and devotion to American institutions and
27 ideals.

28 b. The basic principles of the United States' republican form
29 of government.

30 c. The historical development of the United States'
31 republican form of government.

32 d. Comparison of the United States' republican form
33 of government with different forms of government including
34 dictatorship, monarchy, oligarchy, theocracy, communism, and
35 autocracy.

1 e. An understanding of the Constitution of the United States
2 and the Constitution of the State of Iowa.

3 f. Knowledge of the founding documents and how they have
4 shaped the nature and functions of American institutions of
5 self-governance.

6 g. An understanding of landmark cases of the United States
7 supreme court and their effects on law and society.

8 2. The course shall require students to read documents
9 including but not limited to the following:

10 a. The Constitution of the United States.

11 b. The Declaration of Independence.

12 c. The Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United
13 States.

14 d. The Emancipation Proclamation.

15 e. At least five essays from the federalist papers, as
16 determined by the instructor.

17 f. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s letter from Birmingham jail.

18 g. The Gettysburg Address.

19 Sec. 5. NEW SECTION. **261K.4 Course credit and graduation**
20 **requirements.**

21 1. A public institution of higher education shall assign
22 a value of at least three semester hours of credit or its
23 equivalent to the course required by this chapter.

24 2. The course required by this chapter shall fulfill any
25 general education requirement in the social sciences that a
26 student is required to complete as a condition of graduation.

27 Sec. 6. NEW SECTION. **261K.5 Student transfers.**

28 If a student completes the course required by this chapter
29 at a public institution of higher education and subsequently
30 transfers to another such institution, the student shall not be
31 required to complete the course again.

32 EXPLANATION

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

35 This bill requires a public institution of higher education

1 to establish as a requirement for the completion of any
2 baccalaureate degree program that a student complete a survey
3 course in American history and civil government. The requirement
4 begins with the academic year commencing in 2027. The bill
5 provides minimum required subjects that must be taught and
6 documents that students must read as part of the course.

7 The bill defines a public institution of higher education as
8 a regents institution or a community college with respect to any
9 baccalaureate degree program offered by the community college and
10 to any student enrolled in such a program.

11 The bill provides that the course shall be assigned a value of
12 three semester hours of credit and that the course shall fulfill
13 any general education requirement in the social sciences that is
14 a graduation requirement. The bill provides that a student shall
15 not be required to complete the course again if transferring to
16 another public institution of higher education.