

Senate File 88 - Introduced

SENATE FILE 88

BY DONAHUE

A BILL FOR

1 An Act requiring boards of directors of school districts and the
2 authorities in charge of accredited nonpublic schools to adopt
3 policies related to excusing the absences of students enrolled
4 in grades nine through twelve for civic or political events.
5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

unofficial

1 Section 1. Section 299.1, Code 2025, is amended by adding the
2 following new subsection:

3 NEW SUBSECTION. 3A. a. The board of directors of each
4 public school district and the governing body of each accredited
5 nonpublic school shall adopt a policy that requires the school
6 district or accredited nonpublic school to grant a student who
7 is enrolled in grades nine through twelve at least one excused
8 absence each school year when the student is absent from school
9 because of the student's participation in a civic or political
10 event. The policy shall require all of the following:

11 (1) The board of directors of the school district or the
12 governing body of the accredited nonpublic school shall not grant
13 the student an excused absence to participate in the civic or
14 political event unless the student gives notice of the student's
15 intent to participate in the civic or political event to an
16 administrator employed by the board of directors of the school
17 district or the governing body of the accredited nonpublic school
18 in advance of the civic or political event.

19 (2) The student shall demonstrate the student's knowledge of
20 the civic or political event in which the student participated
21 by preparing a short essay, presenting information related to the
22 civic or political event, or through any other means the school
23 determines will demonstrate a proper representation of what the
24 student learned during the civic or political event.

25 b. For purposes of this subsection, "*civic or political*
26 *event*" includes all of the following:

27 (1) Voting in an election.

28 (2) Serving as a poll worker.

29 (3) Participating in a strike.

30 (4) Participating in a public comment period before any
31 public body.

32 (5) Attending a speech by a candidate for a public office.

33 (6) Attending a political forum.

34 (7) Attending a civic forum.

35 (8) Attending a town hall meeting.

1 Sec. 2. Section 299.1, subsection 4, paragraph b, Code 2025,
2 is amended by adding the following new subparagraph:

3 NEW SUBPARAGRAPH. (7) While participating in a civic or
4 political event in accordance with a policy adopted under
5 subsection 3A.

6 Sec. 3. Section 299.12, subsection 1, paragraph a, Code 2025,
7 is amended to read as follows:

8 a. "*Chronically absent*" means any absence from school for
9 more than ten percent of the days or hours in the grading
10 period established by a public school; provided, however, that an
11 absence from school that is related to participation in a civic
12 or political event in accordance with a policy adopted under
13 section 299.1, subsection 3A, shall not count toward this amount.

14 EXPLANATION

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

17 This bill requires boards of directors of school districts
18 and the authorities in charge of accredited nonpublic schools
19 to adopt policies related to excusing the absences of students
20 enrolled in grades 9 through 12 for civic or political events.

21 The bill requires the board of directors of each public
22 school district and the authorities in charge of each accredited
23 nonpublic school to adopt a policy that requires the school
24 district or accredited nonpublic school to grant a student who is
25 enrolled in grades 9 through 12 at least one excused absence each
26 school year when the student is absent from school because of the
27 student's participation in a civic or political event. The bill
28 establishes that such policy is to include a requirement that the
29 student give notice of the student's intent to participate in the
30 civic or political event in advance and a requirement that the
31 student demonstrate what the student learned during the student's
32 participation in the civic or political event.

33 The bill defines "civic or political event" to include voting
34 in an election, serving as a poll worker, participating in a
35 strike, participating in a public comment period before any

1 public body, attending a speech by a candidate for a public
2 office, attending a political forum, attending a civic forum, or
3 attending a town hall meeting.

4 The bill provides that a student's absence from school that is
5 related to participation in a civic or political event shall not
6 be considered an absence from school for purposes of truancy or
7 the enforcement of standards related to chronic absenteeism.

unofficial