

**Commission on Civics Education
Wednesday, September 28, 2005
House Room D, General Assembly Building,
Capitol Square, Richmond
10:00 a.m.**

Meeting Summary

The Commission on Civics Education, established by House Bill 1769 as an advisory commission in the executive branch of state government, held its first meeting on September 28, 2005.

Members Present

The Honorable Kenneth C. Alexander
The Honorable William Roscoe Reynolds
The Honorable Beverly J. Sherwood
The Honorable Robert Tata
Stephen R. Adkins
Carmela C. Bills
Dr. Stephen G. Bragaw
Thomas C. Coen
Dr. Sheila G. Hill
Glen H. Hoptman
Dr. Sean O'Brien
J. Westwood Smithers, Jr.
Ginger Stanley
Kenneth S. Stroupe, Jr.

Members Absent

The Honorable Frederick M. Quayle
The Honorable R. Lee Ware, Jr.

Other Persons in Attendance

The Honorable James H. Dillard
Ted McConnell
Mark Molli
Rod Clemons

Ex-Officio Present

David E. Johnson (Designee for The Honorable Judith W. Jagdmann)
Dr. Barbara A. Perry

Ex-Officio Absent

The Honorable Mark R. Warner
The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine
The Honorable Judith W. Jagdmann
Dr. Jo Lynne DeMary
Thomas Jackson

Department of Education

Dr. Linda Wallinger
Mrs. Anne Wescott (Absent)
Dr. Beverly Thurston

Welcome and Purpose of the Meeting

Dr. Linda Wallinger called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. and completed the roll call.

Each Civics Commission member introduced themselves to the committee. Dr. Wallinger reviewed the six explicit powers and duties of the Commission.

Dr. Wallinger opened the floor for nominations to Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Civics Commission. The group unanimously elected Delegate Robert Tata as Chairman and Glen H. Hoptman as Vice-Chairman.

Delegate Tata:

- Welcomed committee members and recognized Delegate James Dillard for his efforts in getting this important legislation (HB 1769) through the General Assembly this year.
- Reported on the Third Annual Congressional Civics Education Conference.

Delegate Dillard:

- Provided overview of HB 1769.
- Expressed the need for students to learn about civics in action.
- Indicated that the civics program, *Resources for Teaching Virginia Government*, needed to be updated and expressed concern over the lack of civics education in International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement classrooms.
- Explained that civic education is a core program that should be included in all kindergarten through grade twelve classrooms.

Ted McConnell, Director of the National Campaign to Promote Civic Education:

- Introduced Mark Molli of the Alliance for Representative Democracy and Civics Education.
- Cited *We the People* and *Project Citizen* as examples of two current programs in civics education.
- Recognized the efforts of Ms. Carmela Bills, the Information and Public Relations Manager, House of Delegates, in her work with Virginia's legislative leaders to coordinate the *Virginia Legislators Back to School Program* activities.
- Addressed the need to have civics education infused systematically through grades kindergarten through grade twelve.
- Discussed the Third Annual Congressional Civics Education Conference.
- Recognized the Sweet Briar faculty for their work.

Mark Molli:

- Listed perceived serious shortcomings in civics education.
- Explained that teacher preparation is a means to address these shortcomings.
- Indicated that teacher development programs needed more support.
- Supported the strength of the elementary curriculum, *We the People*.
- Supported accountability and sought more information about the role of civics in the Standards of Learning program.

Stephen Adkins:

- Served on the local school board.
- Observed history classrooms with student hands-on activities.
- Encouraged student excitement about learning.

- Stressed the importance in teaching about the struggle of minorities and women in civics education.

Delegate Alexander:

- Referred to the meaningful activity of *Youth in Government Day* in Norfolk Public Schools.
- Stressed the need to establish a greater focus on civics.

Thomas Coen:

- Commented that Virginia Standards of Learning are evident in the government and civics classrooms across Virginia.
- Reported that students may earn a Board of Education Diploma Seal for Excellence in Civics Education.
- Would like to survey teachers and how they plan to incorporate the November election in their classroom instruction.
- Will share the survey results with the committee at the January meeting.

Dr. Shelia Hill:

- Pointed out that civics standards are infused throughout the curriculum.
- Discussed the importance of focusing on civics education in the elementary grades prior to middle school.
- Recommended that additional instructional materials and resources are needed in the elementary classroom to provide support to teachers.

Glen Hoptman:

- Expressed the need to inventory the civics Standards of Learning.
- Recommended a survey to gather feedback regarding the role of the election in the classroom.

Carmela Bills:

- Spoke of the tools and resources offered to classroom teachers through the Virginia Legislators Back to School Program.
- Reported that last year 15,000 students came through the House Chamber.

Dr. Barbara Perry:

- Reported on the Third Annual Congressional Civics Education Conference.
- Explained that the third of five planned annual conferences was designed to help strengthen our democracy by furthering the general public's engagement in the civic and political affairs of the nation.

- Reported that the conference is sponsored by the Alliance for Representative Democracy and hosted by the Joint Leadership of the U.S. Congress and the initiative complements the ongoing Campaign to Promote Civic Education sponsored by the Center for Civic Education.

Kenneth Stroupe, Jr.:

- Reported on the Center for Politics and the Youth Leadership Initiative.
- Spoke on the service learning phenomenon occurring in high schools.
- Indicated that service learning activities are not a replacement for civics education.

Rod Clemons:

- Thanked the committee for attending the meeting and devoting time to the Commission.
- Expressed the need to look at the phenomena such as low voting turnout and the spirit of involvement.

Dr. Sean O'Brien:

- Indicated that he felt the committee was charged with elevating the students to a higher awareness of the content in the Virginia and United States Government Standards of Learning.

In conclusion, Delegate Tata shared that while the first meeting had been spontaneous in nature, subsequent meetings will be more formal in response to the charge of the purpose of the Commission on Civics Education. He discussed the calendar dates of future meetings. The Commission will hold four meetings a year. Committee members agreed on January 3, 2006, at 2:00 p.m. for the next meeting.

Delegate Tata adjourned the meeting at 11:55 a.m.