

Executive Summary of the Interim activity and work of the Commission on Civics Education 2015

Members

Legislative Members:

The Honorable Richard L. Anderson, Chair
The Honorable R. Lee Ware, Jr.
The Honorable Brenda L. Pogge
The Honorable Luke E. Torian
The Honorable Kaye Kory
The Honorable J. Chapman Petersen
The Honorable Richard H. Black
The Honorable David W. Marsden, Vice Chair

Citizen Members:

The Honorable James H. Dillard II
Ms. Ginger Stanley
Mr. Bob Gibson
Mr. Thomas C. Coen
Mr. G. Michael Wildasin
Ms. Jennifer Patja Howell

Ex Officio Members:

Ms. Christonya B. Brown

Staff:

Ryan B. Brimmer, Attorney, Division of Legislative Services
Scott Maddrea, Deputy Clerk, Virginia House of Delegates

BACKGROUND

The Commission on Civics Education is the legislative body charged with (i) educating students on the importance of citizen involvement in a constitutional republic, (ii) promoting the study of state and local government among the Commonwealth's citizenry, (iii) enhancing communication and collaboration among organizations in the Commonwealth that conduct civics education, (iv) developing and coordinating outreach programs in collaboration with schools to educate students on the importance of understanding that (a) a constitutional republic is a form of government dependent on reasoned debate and good faith negotiation; (b) individual involvement is a critical factor in community success; and (c) consideration of and respect for others is essential to deliberating, negotiating, and advocating positions on public concerns, (v)

identifying civics education projects in the Commonwealth and providing technical assistance as may be needed to such programs, (vi) building a network of civics education professionals to share information and strengthen partnerships, (vii) developing, in consultation with entities represented on the Commission and others as determined by the Commission, a clearinghouse that shall be accessible on the Department of Education's website to include, among other things, (a) a database of civics education resources, lesson plans, and other programs of best practices in civics education; (b) a bulletin board to promote discussion and exchange of ideas relative to civics education; (c) an events calendar; and (d) links to civics education research, and (viii) making recommendations to the Board of Education regarding revisions to the Standards of Learning for civics and government. *See* Virginia Code §§ 30-348 and 30-351.

INTERIM ACTIVITY AND WORK OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission met three times during the 2015 interim and held its annual Civics Summit in November.

April 2015 meeting

The Commission held its first meeting of the 2015 interim on Monday, April 20, 2015 at the Robert H. Smith Center for the Constitution, Lewis Hall, at James Madison's Montpelier. A quorum was present and consisted of Delegate Anderson, Delegate Ware, Senator Marsden, Mr. Dillard, Ms. Brown, Mr. Coen, Mr. Gibson, Ms. Howell, Ms. Stanley, and Mr. Wildasin. The Commission reviewed, discussed, and updated recommendations that it generated during a March 2010 meeting at the same location. The meeting was followed by lunch and a tour of the grounds.

September 2015 meeting

The Commission held its second meeting of the 2015 interim on Wednesday, September 9, 2015, at 10:00am in House Room 3 of the General Assembly Building. Members in attendance were Delegate Anderson, Delegate Pogge, Senator Petersen, Senator Marsden, Ms. Howell, and Mr. Wildasin. Mr. Dillard participated in the meeting from a remote location by telephone conference. The Commission discussed initial drafts of (i) a resolution for introduction in the 2016 Regular Session of the General Assembly in support of professional development for teachers to increase their content knowledge relating to civic education and (ii) an Action Plan for the Commission that includes support for the development of (a) a civic-education-related high school diploma seal, (b) a civic education website, (c) regional teacher professional development workshops, (d) guidelines on teaching contemporary and controversial issues, and (e) future annual Civic Education Summits.

Annual Civic Summit

The Virginia Commission on Civics Education sponsored its annual Civics Summit on Thursday, November 12, 2015 in House Room 3 of the State Capitol. Elementary, middle, and high school government teachers from school across the Commonwealth attended. Also in attendance were Delegate Anderson, Senator Marsden, Ms. Brown, Ms. Howell, and Mr.

Wildasin. The theme of the Summit was the executive branch of state government. The Summit featured presentations by the Governor and the First Lady of Virginia.

January 2016 meeting

The Commission held its third and final meeting of the 2015 interim on Monday, January 11, 2016, at 10:00am in House Room C of the General Assembly Building. A quorum was present and consisted of vice chairman Senator Marsden, Delegate Ware, Delegate Pogge, Delegate Kory, Mr. Dillard, Ms. Stanley, Mr. Gibson, Mr. Coen, Mr. Wildasin, Ms. Howell, and Ms. Brown. The Commission formally adopted HJ 86 (Anderson) and solicited co-patrons from among the legislative membership and discussed input received from attendees of the annual Civics Summit. In response to a comprehensive presentation by Ms. Brown on each element of the Commission's Action Plan adopted in September, the Commission discussed (i) the possibility of nominating a Commission member to train trainers for K-12 History and Social Science SOL Institutes, an in-service training program being planned by the Department of Education, (ii) the possibility of moving the diploma seal for excellence in civics education to the eighth grade, (iii) the Board of Education's proposed regulatory action on the use of controversial or sensitive instructional material, and (iv) the possibility of the General Assembly hosting the civics education website, which was last updated and managed by the Department of Education.