

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8797

To establish a Congressional Commission on Civics Education, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 20, 2020

Mr. CICILLINE (for himself, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, Mr. BEYER, Ms. WILD, Ms. MENG, Mr. SUOZZI, and Mr. RASKIN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To establish a Congressional Commission on Civics Education, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Commission on Amer-
5 ican Civics Education Act of 2020”.

1 **SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL COMMISSION ON CIVICS EDU-**
2 **CATION.**

3 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—There is established the Congres-
4 sional Commission on Civics Education (referred to in this
5 Act as the “Commission”).

6 (b) **MEMBERSHIP.**—

7 (1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Commission shall be
8 composed of 10 members, of whom:

9 (A) Five shall be appointed by the Speaker
10 of the House and the House Minority Leader,
11 in consultation with the Chair and Ranking
12 Member of the House Committee on Education
13 and Labor.

14 (B) Five shall be appointed by the Senate
15 Majority Leader and Senate Minority Leader,
16 in consultation with the Chair and Ranking
17 Member of the Senate Committee on Health,
18 Education, Labor, and Pensions.

19 (2) **EXPERTISE OF MEMBERS.**—Members ap-
20 pointed under paragraph (1) shall represent entities
21 or professions having to do with civic knowledge and
22 education, including—

23 (A) elementary and secondary schools;

24 (B) institutions of higher education;

25 (C) State educational agencies;

26 (D) local educational agencies;

1 (E) Federal, State, or local government;

2 (F) journalism; and

3 (G) nonprofit providers of civic education.

4 (3) LIMITATIONS.—Members appointed under
5 paragraph (1) may not be—

6 (A) at any time during such appointment,
7 a Member of Congress; or

8 (B) individuals who have made political
9 contributions of any amount to any appointing
10 Congressional officials at any time.

11 (4) COMMISSION CHAIRS.—From the members
12 appointed under paragraph (1), the Commission
13 shall be co-chaired by—

14 (A) 1 member selected by the appointing
15 Congressional officials belonging to the majority
16 party; and

17 (B) 1 member selected by the appointing
18 Congressional officials belonging to the minority
19 party.

20 (5) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—Each member shall
21 receive travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of
22 subsistence, in accordance with applicable provisions
23 under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United
24 States Code.

25 (c) STAFF OF COMMISSION.—

1 (1) DIRECTOR.—The Commission shall have a
2 Director who shall be appointed by the co-chairs.

3 (2) STAFF.—To the extent or in the amounts
4 provided in advance in appropriation Acts, the Di-
5 rector, in coordination with the co-chairs, may ap-
6 point and fix the pay of additional personnel as the
7 Commission considers appropriate.

8 (3) EXPERTS AND CONSULTANTS.—The Com-
9 mission may procure temporary and intermittent
10 services under section 3109(b) of title 5, United
11 States Code.

12 (d) DUTIES.—The Commission shall:

13 (1) Examine existing civics education programs
14 in each State.

15 (2) Solicit the views of educators, school admin-
16 istrators, and other State and local education offi-
17 cials, including through—

18 (A) direct contact and engagement;

19 (B) field hearings;

20 (C) roundtable discussions; and

21 (D) focus groups.

22 (3) Submit the report required under subsection
23 (f).

24 (e) POWERS.—

1 (1) HEARINGS.—The Commission may, for pur-
2 poses of carrying out this Act, hold hearings, sit and
3 act at times and places, take testimony, and receive
4 evidence as the Commission considers appropriate.

5 (2) OBTAINING OFFICIAL DATA.—The Commis-
6 sion may secure directly from any department or
7 agency of the United States information necessary to
8 enable it to carry out this Act.

9 (3) GIFTS, BEQUESTS, AND DEVICES.—The
10 Commission may accept, use, and dispose of gifts,
11 bequests, or devices of services or property, both real
12 and personal, in a manner that does not affect the
13 findings of the Commission.

14 (4) MAILS.—The Commission may use the
15 United States mails in the same manner and under
16 the same conditions as other departments and agen-
17 cies of the United States.

18 (5) ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES.—
19 Upon the request of the Commission, the Adminis-
20 trator of General Services shall provide to the Com-
21 mission, on a reimbursable basis, the administrative
22 support services necessary for the Commission to
23 carry out the responsibilities of the Commission
24 under this Act.

25 (f) REPORT.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 18 months
2 after the date of the first meeting of the Commis-
3 sion, the Commission shall submit a report to Con-
4 gress that contains the following:

5 (A) A description of each State that exhib-
6 its—

7 (i) high levels of success in civic edu-
8 cation and civic learning;

9 (ii) moderate levels of success in civic
10 education and civic learning; and

11 (iii) low levels of success in civic edu-
12 cation and civic learning.

13 (B) A determination with respect to exist-
14 ing State civic education programs that may be
15 used as national models in all States.

16 (C) Recommendations to the Secretary of
17 Education with respect to issuing guidance on
18 civics education to States.

19 (D) A recommendation as to how the Sec-
20 retary should dedicate Department funds and
21 resources to promoting civics education, includ-
22 ing with respect to establishing an office dedi-
23 cated to civics education.

24 (2) BRIEFING.—Upon submission of the report
25 described in paragraph (1), the Commission shall

1 brief, with respect to the contents of such report, the
2 following individuals:

3 (A) Appointing Congressional officials.

4 (B) Members of the House Committee on
5 Education and Labor.

6 (C) Members of the Senate Committee on
7 Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

8 (D) The Secretary.

9 (3) PUBLICATION.—Not later than 90 days
10 after the date on which the briefing required under
11 paragraph (2) occurs, the Secretary shall make the
12 report described in paragraph (1) publicly available
13 on the website of the Department of Education.

14 (g) MONTHLY EXPENSE REPORTS.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall sub-
16 mit to the Chief Administrator of the House of Rep-
17 resentatives a detailed monthly expense report for
18 each month in accordance with paragraph (2).

19 (2) TIMING.—With respect to a month, a report
20 required under paragraph (1) shall be submitted
21 during the period beginning on the first day of such
22 month and ending on the day that is 15 days after
23 the last day of such month.

1 (h) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This Act shall take effect on
2 the date that is 60 days after the date of the enactment
3 of this Act.

4 (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be
6 appropriated such sums as are necessary to carry
7 out this section.

8 (2) ADDITIONAL USES.—In addition to carrying
9 out the activities described in this section, the Com-
10 mission may use the funds appropriated under para-
11 graph (1) for—

12 (A) office supplies;

13 (B) necessary electronic equipment, includ-
14 ing—

15 (i) computers;

16 (ii) printers; and

17 (iii) telecommunications equipment;

18 and

19 (C) maintenance costs, including—

20 (i) technical support; and

21 (ii) equipment repair.

22 (j) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

23 (1) APPOINTING CONGRESSIONAL OFFICIAL.—

24 The term “appointing Congressional official”
25 means—

- 1 (A) the Speaker of the House;
2 (B) the House Minority Leader;
3 (C) the Senate Majority Leader; and
4 (D) the Senate Minority Leader.

5 (2) ESEA TERMS.—The terms “Department”,
6 “elementary school”, “local educational agency”,
7 “secondary school”, “Secretary”, “State”, and
8 “State educational agency” have the meanings given
9 such terms in section 8101 of the Elementary and
10 Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

11 (3) NONPROFIT PROVIDER OF CIVIC EDU-
12 CATION.—The term “nonprofit provider of civic edu-
13 cation” means an organization that focuses on sup-
14 porting and strengthening civics education pro-
15 grams.

○