



HB1143 – Patriotism Projects

NDCEL Testimony in Support with requested amendments

Chairman Owens, members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to be here today to discuss this bill. For the record, my name is Dr. Aimee Copas. I serve as the Executive Director for the ND Council of Educational Leaders.

My personal background argues my support for this bill as well as my request for a small amendment to the bill to make it more workable for schools. It is worth noting that in requesting slight amendments to the bill, I spoke to the bill sponsor and he is supportive as well as one of the co-sponsors of the bill.

First of all let's talk about what is good here. As a former teacher, my degree was in English with a minor in History. In the English courses I taught, in every school I was at, I patterned a method taught to me by my cooperating teacher who was Jody Foy a former (and I might say AMAZING) English teacher at Bismarck High School. She too was just as passionate about our student's need to correctly understand our history so that we might not repeat the mistakes made by those who came before us and we could replicate their good works. Henceforth our method of teaching was to partner with the history department and teach items in a co-curricular fashion. For example, when in History they were learning about the French Revolution, I taught *A Tale of Two Cities*, when learning about WWII, I taught *Farewell to Manzanar*. If I was still teaching today, during the times of early settlement to the US, I would teach *The Salem Witch Trials – A Community Under Siege*, and during the American Revolution we'd defiantly read *1776*, by David McCollough. This method of teaching at the HS level is important. But where the interest in these times in our history really grows is in elementary.

Our ND Elementary teachers, understanding this, appropriately adjusted the Social Studies standards just a couple of years ago and the work outlined in this bill is appropriately adjusted and required within the standard.

Our standards in ND Specifically state for K-5: *To be a responsible and productive member of today's society, a student needs to have a broad, connected, and useful knowledge of social studies and civics education. A consistent, high-quality social studies education program is essential for all students, providing a foundation for intelligent and precise thinking. Social studies education should also provide every student the opportunity to choose among a full range of future career paths and to contribute to society as an informed and active citizen.*

Below is specifically what in Grades K-5 our teachers are to be focusing on while teaching their coursework in social studies (included below is only one small excerpt from the standard guidance:

NDCEL is the strongest unifying voice representing and supporting administrators and educational leaders in pursuit of quality education for all students in North Dakota.

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K-5 Civics & Government Standards

C.K_2.1 Explain reasons for, and purposes of, rules, laws, and positions of authority.

C.K_2.2 Explain why people form governments.

C.K_2.3 Identify services provided by the local government and how they affect the lives of its citizens/residents. C.K_2.4 Describe the core values represented by symbols of the United States.

C.K_2.5 Identify ways citizens/residents participate in community decisions.

C.K_2.6 Describe important rights and responsibilities of citizens/residents.

C.K_2.7 Explain and/or participate in a project to help or inform others about an issue.

C.3_5.1 Compare and contrast the responsibilities and powers of government officials at various levels and branches of government.

C.3_5.2 Describe the structure of government and how it functions to serve citizens/residents (e.g., Constitution, Amendments, government leaders). C.3_5.3 Describe the structure of government in North Dakota and how it functions to serve citizens/residents. ♦

C.3_5.4 Explain the importance of the basic principles that provide the foundation of the American system of government (e.g., symbols, patriotic traditions, values of liberty, equality, justice, etc.).

C.3_5.5 Describe procedures for making decisions in a variety of settings.

C.3_5.6 Compare and contrast personal and civic responsibilities and explain why they are important in community life. C.3_5.7 Develop and implement an action plan to address or inform others about an issue.

As you can see C.K_2.7 requires what this bill is asking for. That is great. Not only does the bill highlight an important activity, but it also highlights an area in the required standards and helps assure teachers are addressing it. In conversations with school leaders, most all of our schools are already doing this, but this would help ensure that all are abiding by this standard.

This is where we'd ask for a modest adjustment to the bill. In this bill on page 2 , lines 6-10 it outlines sharing of data and a reporting requirement. Those of you who have served in the legislature for a while know that school districts are heavily burdened with reporting requirements and many of them are ones that take significant time to do and translate little relevant data.



#7 asks for evaluation data regarding the projects. The method by which teachers evaluate student work and student scores specific to a course and a project at that level are not data fields shared outside of a school district. That is district level data – not state level data. This should require a data sharing agreement. We'd ask that instead, we treat this particular reporting request to be handled similarly to the Civics Test bill that passed through the legislature a couple sessions ago. That reporting requirement was an assurance that the work was complete that was provided in the STARS system and then communicated with the state. This reporting requirement would not be burdensome and is one that our educational leaders can support.

In #8 the superintendent is to report annually about the projects. School based stories could be requested on a voluntary basis to provide examples of projects. This is not an uncommon practice and one that is done regularly. Often legislative leaders and state leaders are invited to come and see first hand the results of the student's work.

Below is a suggestion of how this amendment could look:

7. Each school district shall provide an assurance of completion of the patriotism project evaluation data to the superintendent of public instruction through the shared student information system. at the time and in the manner requested by the superintendent of public instruction.

8. The superintendent of public instruction shall report annually to the governor and the legislative management regarding the compliance to this section and may provide examples of patriotism projects in school districts.

We thank you for your consideration of this bill and ask that you please pass the amendment and as amended send forth with a do-pass. Thank you for your time.