

Model Legislation: The Reclaiming College Education on America’s Constitutional Heritage (REACH) Act

Section 1: Title

This act is known and may be cited as the “Reclaiming College Education on America’s Constitutional Heritage Act” or the “REACH Act.”

Section 2: Legislative Findings and Purpose

The legislature finds that civics education is essential to the functioning of American democracy. The Act aims to ensure that all college and university graduates in [state] are prepared for their civic responsibilities through deep civic knowledge and understanding America’s constitutional heritage.

Section 3: Required College Three-Credit-Hour Course on America’s Founding Documents for Associate Degree and Baccalaureate Degree

(a) Each public college and university in [state] must require each undergraduate student, except a student eligible for the exemption provided in Section 3(b), to complete no fewer than three credit hours, or their equivalent, in the subject of American government. This American government course of three credit hours, or their equivalent, must, at a minimum, require each undergraduate student to:

1. Read the United States Constitution in its entirety;
2. Read the Declaration of Independence in its entirety;
3. Read a minimum of five essays in their entirety from the Federalist Papers as selected by an instructor;
4. Read the Emancipation Proclamation in its entirety;
5. Read the Gettysburg Address in its entirety;
6. Read Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Letter from Birmingham Jail in its entirety; and
7. Pass a cumulative final examination at the conclusion of the course, testing for student proficiency in the provisions and principles of the aforementioned works. This cumulative final examination must comprise at least twenty percent of the total grade of the course.

(b) Exemptions for Advanced Placement, dual enrollment, and International Baccalaureate courses taken in high school, qualifying stipulations:

- (i) A college or university may exempt from the requirements of Section 3(a) a student who has successfully completed three credit hours, or their equivalent, in an Advanced Placement course in the subject of American government and who passes the accompanying Advanced Placement exam, provided the Advanced Placement course satisfies the requirements of Section 3(a).
 - (ii) A college or university may exempt from the requirements of Section 3(a) a student who has successfully completed three credit hours, or their equivalent, in a dual-enrollment course in the subject of American government, provided the dual-enrollment course satisfies the requirements of subsection Section 3(a).
 - (iii) A college or university may exempt from the requirements of Section 3(a) a student who has successfully completed three credit hours, or their equivalent, in an International Baccalaureate course in the subject of American government, provided the International Baccalaureate course satisfies the requirements of subsection Section 3(a).
- (c) The president of each college and university must ensure that the requirements of Section 3(a) are incorporated into the degree requirements of all associate-degree programs in a manner that does not add to the total number of credit hours for any associate-degree program.
- (d) The [state higher education regulating agency/agencies] must annually report on the compliance status of each college and university with [this law]. This report must contain copies of all syllabi and reading lists from each section of each course that any college or university allows to fulfill the course requirement of Section 3(a). This report must be submitted annually to [State House and Senate education committees].

Section 4: Penalty for Noncompliance

If any president of any college or university fails to enforce the provisions of this Act for more than one academic year, the [state higher education regulating agency/agencies] may remove the president from office.

Section 5: Severability

If any provision of this chapter, or the application of any provision to any person or circumstance, is held to be invalid, the remainder of this chapter and the application of its provisions to any other person or circumstance shall not be affected thereby.

Section 6: Effective Date

This Act applies to future first-year classes of associate- and baccalaureate-degree programs after the effective date of this act. This act takes effect one year after it becomes law.