

# SENATE . . . . . No. 2306

---

## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninetieth General Court  
(2017-2018)

An Act to promote and enhance civic engagement.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2014 Official Edition,  
2 is hereby amended by inserting at striking out Section 2 and replacing it with the following  
3 section:-

4 Section 2. (a) For purposes of this section, the following terms shall have the following  
5 meanings:-

6 “student-led civics project” is a project-based approach that involves a student-led  
7 inquiry process and use of interdisciplinary concepts, structured around complex questions and  
8 engaging tasks and challenges.

9 “The Board” is the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

10 “The Framework” is the History and Social Science Curriculum Framework

11 “The Department” is the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

12 (b) The Board shall ensure that in all public schools, American history and civics  
13 education shall be taught as required subjects for the purpose of promoting civic service and a  
14 greater knowledge thereof, and of preparing students, morally and intellectually, for the duties of  
15 citizenship, provided that, in elementary and secondary schools, American history and civics,  
16 including the constitution of the United States, the declaration of independence and the bill of  
17 rights, the constitution of the commonwealth and local history and government, and a program  
18 relating to the flag of the United States of America, including, but not limited to, proper  
19 etiquette, the correct use and display of the flag, the importance of participation in the electoral  
20 process and the provisions of 36 U.S.C. 170 to 177, inclusive shall be taught.

21 (c) The History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks shall include, but not be  
22 limited to, the following topics: (i) the function and composition of the branches of local, state  
23 and federal government; (ii) the Constitution of the United States, the Declaration of  
24 Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the Constitution of the Commonwealth; (iii) the electoral  
25 process, (iv) the roles and responsibilities of a citizen in a democracy; (v) media literacy skills  
26 that equip students with the knowledge and skills for accessing, analyzing, evaluating, and  
27 creating all types of media, including print, online, television, and social media; (vi) the  
28 diversity present in our communities and the role it plays in the democratic process; (vii)  
29 knowledge of the ways in which civic participation has been restricted throughout history; and  
30 (viii) opportunities to identify and debate issues relative to power, economic status, and the  
31 common good in democracy.

32 (e) There shall be set upon the books of the Commonwealth a fund known as the Civics  
33 Project Fund. The Fund shall be used by the Department to implement this section, including  
34 offering professional development and developing model curriculum. The fund shall consist of

35 revenues collected by the commonwealth including: (1) appropriations authorized by the general  
36 court to be credited to the fund; (2) interest earned on such revenues; and (3) funds donated from  
37 other sources. Any balance in the fund at the end of the fiscal year shall not revert to the General  
38 Fund, but shall remain available for expenditure in subsequent fiscal years.

39 (f) The Board shall adopt a policy that requires every student in the Massachusetts public  
40 school system have the opportunity to participate in no less than 2 student-led civics projects, at  
41 least one of which would be completed after 8th grade and may be a high school graduation  
42 requirement. Said projects may be individual, or small group, or class wide, or as part of required  
43 coursework. Projects may include but not be limited to, student-centered inquiry investigating  
44 the connections among and/or between federal, state, or local policies and an issue that impacts  
45 the student's community. Projects may be integrated into coursework in any of the subject areas  
46 taught in district schools.

47 (g) The Department may establish, subject to sufficient resources in the fund, regional  
48 civics councils to monitor and provide resources for civics education and the implementation of  
49 student-led civics projects. Regional civics councils may consist of representatives from higher  
50 education, nonprofits, the business community, elected officials, and K-12 institutions including  
51 parents, principals or school administrators, teachers and school committee members. Regional  
52 civics councils may include at least two voting high-school student members and shall solicit  
53 student input from students in their service areas. The Department may establish an annual  
54 convention and invite members of the regional civics councils to attend in order to assess the  
55 current state of civic education, share evidence-based best practices, and make recommendations  
56 to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Board shall promulgate regulations

57 consistent with this section specifying the size, membership, service area, selection process, and  
58 responsibilities for regional civics councils, subject to available resources.

59 (h) Each student representative to a school committee shall be designated as the Student  
60 Outreach Officer. That member shall be responsible to the extent possible for ensuring that a  
61 Student Advisory Council for that school committee exists and is informed of the agenda of the  
62 school committee. Said member shall meet with the school committee in accordance with  
63 M.G.L. Ch 71 §38M.

64 (ii) The Department shall, subject to resources in the fund, create tools, aligned with the  
65 History and Social Science Curriculum Framework, in order to support districts in the  
66 implementation of this section. The Department may collaborate with institutions of higher  
67 education and other research institutions to assist in the evaluation of the implementation of this  
68 section and the evaluation of the achievement of objectives outlined in subsection (f).

69 (j) The Department shall, subject to resources in the fund, establish the Edward Moore  
70 Kennedy and Edward William Brooke III Civics Challenge which shall be implemented no later  
71 than the 2022-2023 academic year. The Challenge shall be available to all eighth-grade students  
72 in the Massachusetts public school system. Participating students shall present civics projects to  
73 be evaluated and recognized as determined by the Department.

74 (k) The Secretary of the Commonwealth shall establish the High School Voter Challenge  
75 that shall be implemented no later than the 2018-2019 academic year. Every public high school  
76 may name one or more currently enrolled pupils designated by the school administrator or  
77 nominated by peers to serve as voter outreach coordinators. The first two full weeks in March  
78 and the last two full weeks in September shall be known as "high school voter challenge weeks"

79 when voter outreach coordinators may hold voter registration drives and reach out to other  
80 students who are eligible to register or pre-register to vote on any high school campus at  
81 locations and times deemed appropriate by the school administrator, or his or her designee,  
82 which are reasonably accessible to all students.

83 SECTION 2 1/4. The Board shall create an endorsement in Action Civics, for educators  
84 that demonstrate competency in teaching civics to students. This section shall be implemented no  
85 later than the 2020-2021 academic year.

86 SECTION 2 1/2 The department shall convene a commission to develop a proposal for the  
87 establishment of a program of civic education and public service for the youth of Massachusetts.  
88 The commission shall consist of 2 members of the senate, 1 of whom shall be the senate  
89 president or the senate president's designee, and 1 of whom shall be appointed by the minority  
90 leader; 2 members of the house of representatives, 1 of whom shall be the speaker of the house  
91 or the speaker's designee, and 1 of whom shall be appointed by the minority leader; the secretary  
92 of education or the secretary's designee; the commissioner of education or the commissioner's  
93 designee, the commissioner of higher education or the commissioner's designee; the president of  
94 the Massachusetts Teachers Association or her/his designee; the president of the American  
95 Federation of Teachers Massachusetts or her/his designee; a representative from Facing History  
96 and Ourselves; a representative from the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies; a  
97 representative from the Massachusetts Service Alliance; a representative from the National  
98 Guard; and 4 members appointed by the governor who shall have demonstrated experience in  
99 and commitment to public service and civic education.

100           The commission shall investigate and study communities, states and/or nations that have  
101 public service requirements for youth, and organizations that promote service in the United  
102 States and the Commonwealth, such as but not limited to AmeriCorps and the Peace Corps. The  
103 study shall consider these questions: when and how in their schooling shall students be exposed  
104 to civics education and expected to engage in public service; how and what agency shall  
105 administer the program; how will the program be funded; how will quality of programming be  
106 maintained; what, if any, incentives or rewards should be in place for participation and success;  
107 if the service participation should be mandatory; and other questions that the commission  
108 members deem fitting.

109           The commission shall report its findings, including any proposed legislation, to the chairs  
110 of the senate and house committees on ways and means, the senate and house clerks, the joint  
111 committee on education, the joint committee on higher education, the executive office of  
112 education, and the office of the governor no later than January 1, 2019.