

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3251

To establish the National Commission on the Impact of United States Culture
on American Youth.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 8, 1999

Ms. KAPTUR (for herself and Mr. HUNTER) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

A BILL

To establish the National Commission on the Impact of
United States Culture on American Youth.

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 “America’s Youth Com-
5 mission Act of 1999”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) American youth, up to 18 years of age, rep-
9 resent the freest, most educated, most affluent gen-
10 eration this Nation has known. A majority will grad-

1 uate from high school, will come from families in
2 which the parents or guardians are employed and
3 own property, and will come from a society which
4 has achieved unparalleled national economic and so-
5 cial opportunity in a world largely at peace.

6 (2) The potential for this generation of Amer-
7 ican youth to make lasting contributions to free-
8 dom's cause is unparalleled. Yet, despite this favor-
9 able domestic and international climate, some seri-
10 ous flaws have appeared in America's social and cul-
11 tural fabric, characterized by destructive behaviors
12 among some of our youth that are damaging our
13 Nation and the ability of this generation to achieve
14 its full potential.

15 (3) While most of America's youth are achiev-
16 ing academically and developing wholesome construc-
17 tive pursuits, youth violence in places like Littleton,
18 Colorado, Springfield, Oregon, and Jonesboro, Ar-
19 kansas, and the rash of copycat incidents, threat-
20 ened or real, across the Nation has brought to the
21 fore a troubling lack of respect by some for other in-
22 dividuals that lies at the heart of a free society.

23 (4) Across our Nation, school "pranks" have in
24 many cases been destructive to schools and property

1 and reveal a serious lack of understanding by the
2 perpetrators of the true costs of their actions.

3 (5) Equally serious are the consistently high
4 and personally destructive levels of alcohol and drug
5 use by American youth, sometimes coupled with gun
6 violence, as well as increasing levels of teenage sui-
7 cide and eating disorders, such as bulimia and ano-
8 rexia.

9 (6) Upholding human dignity faces challenges
10 in the media as well. By the time children in the
11 United States have passed through the eighth grade,
12 they will have witnessed an average of 8,000 mur-
13 ders and over 100,000 other acts of violence through
14 the media. In addition, many video games, music,
15 films, and Internet websites present material so de-
16 grading to human dignity that they undermine the
17 value of human life and elevate the bizarre to nor-
18 mal. Some have characterized this as a “culture of
19 death” that permeates the consciousness of Amer-
20 ican youth.

21 (7) The structure of family, neighborhoods,
22 work, and community in the United States has been
23 transformed in the last 30 years as economic growth
24 and mobility have impacted families’ aspirations and
25 livelihoods. The static purchasing power of families,

1 mergers, and dislocation of production, higher family
2 mobility and suburbanization, rising levels of foster
3 children, all have contributed to a more fluid social
4 structure and less continuity for youth in permanent
5 nurturing relationships with family and community.
6 The social consequences of these changes, along with
7 the pervasive influence of media, demand attention,
8 for developmental attachments by adults toward
9 youth that characterized previous generations have
10 become more tenuous in today's society.

11 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT.**

12 There is established a commission to be known as the
13 “National Commission on the Impact of United States
14 Culture on America's Youth” (hereinafter in this Act re-
15 ferred to as the “Commission”).

16 **SEC. 4. DUTY OF COMMISSION.**

17 The Commission shall investigate and make findings
18 and recommendations with respect to—

19 (1) the condition and status of contemporary
20 youth in America compared to prior generations,
21 with particular attention to family, neighborhood,
22 schools, scholastic attainment, work, and community
23 involvement;

1 (2) the nature, origins, and trends of antisocial
2 and violent behavior among American youth,
3 including—

4 (A) an analysis of the trends in violent
5 acts in families, neighborhoods, and schools;
6 and

7 (B) the influence of organizations, other
8 cultural elements, and individuals contributing
9 to the incitement or encouragement of violent
10 behaviors;

11 (3) identification of successful initiatives that
12 involve youth in positive development and experi-
13 ences that curb antisocial behavior among youth;

14 (4) recommendations for averting and reducing
15 violence among American youth; and

16 (5) recommendations for parents, families, non-
17 governmental and private sector organizations and
18 Federal, State, and local authorities in building posi-
19 tive developmental experiences among American
20 youth.

21 **SEC. 5. MEMBERSHIP.**

22 (a) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Commission
23 shall be composed of 11 members appointed as follows:

24 (1) Two members appointed by the Speaker of
25 the House of Representatives.

1 (2) Two members appointed by the majority
2 Leader of the Senate.

3 (3) Two members appointed by the minority
4 Leader of the House of Representatives.

5 (4) Two members appointed by the minority
6 Leader of the Senate.

7 (5) Three members appointed by the President.

8 (b) QUALIFICATIONS.—The members shall—

9 (1) not be incumbent Members of Congress;
10 and

11 (2) be specially qualified to serve on the Com-
12 mission by reason of education, training, or experi-
13 ence.

14 (c) TERMS.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Each member shall be ap-
16 pointed for the life of the Commission.

17 (2) VACANCIES.—A vacancy in the Commission
18 shall be filled in the manner in which the original
19 appointment was made.

20 (d) BASIC PAY.—Members shall serve without pay.

21 (e) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—Each member shall receive
22 travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence,
23 in accordance with section 5703 of title 5, United States
24 Code.

1 (f) QUORUM.—Seven members of the Commission
2 shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number may hold
3 hearings.

4 (g) CHAIR.—The Chair of the Commission shall be
5 designated by the President at the time of the appoint-
6 ment.

7 **SEC. 6. POWERS OF COMMISSION.**

8 (a) HEARINGS AND SESSIONS.—The Commission
9 may, for the purpose of carrying out this Act, hold hear-
10 ings, sit and act at times and places, take testimony, and
11 receive evidence as the Commission considers appropriate.
12 The Commission shall ensure that its hearings and ses-
13 sions are open to the public, with significant opportunities
14 for testimony from members of the general public.

15 (b) POWERS OF MEMBERS AND AGENTS.—Any mem-
16 ber or agent of the Commission may, if authorized by the
17 Commission, take any action which the Commission is au-
18 thorized to take by this section.

19 (c) OBTAINING OFFICIAL DATA.—The Commission
20 may secure directly from any department or agency of the
21 United States information necessary to enable it to carry
22 out this Act. Upon request of the Chairperson of the Com-
23 mission, the head of that department or agency shall co-
24 operate with the Commission in providing that informa-
25 tion.

1 (d) ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES.—Upon
2 the request of the Commission, the Administrator of Gen-
3 eral Services shall provide to the Commission, on a reim-
4 bursable basis, the administrative support services nec-
5 essary for the Commission to carry out its responsibilities
6 under this Act.

7 (e) CONTRACT AUTHORITY.—The Commission may
8 contract with and compensate Government or private
9 agencies or persons for supplies or services, without regard
10 to section 3709 of the Revised Statutes (41 U.S.C. 5).

11 **SEC. 7. REPORT.**

12 (a) INTERIM REPORT.—The Commission shall trans-
13 mit an interim report to the President and the Congress
14 not later than 180 days after the date the Commission
15 is duly organized.

16 (b) FINAL REPORT.—The Commission shall transmit
17 a final report to the President and the Congress not later
18 than one year after the date the Commission is duly orga-
19 nized. The final report shall contain a detailed statement
20 of the findings and conclusions of the Commission, to-
21 gether with its recommendations for legislation.

22 **SEC. 8. TERMINATION.**

23 The Commission shall terminate 30 days after trans-
24 mitting its final report pursuant to section 7(b).

1 **SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

2 There is authorized to be appropriated \$10,000,000
3 for fiscal year 2000 to carry out this Act, to remain avail-
4 able until expended.

5 **SEC. 10. BUDGET ACT COMPLIANCE.**

6 Any spending authority (as defined in subparagraphs
7 (A) and (C) of section 401(c)(2) of the Congressional
8 Budget Act of 1974 (2 U.S.C. 651(c)(2)(A) and (C))) au-
9 thorized by this Act shall be effective only to such extent
10 and in such amounts as are provided in appropriation
11 Acts.

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