

116TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 849

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to increase civics education programs, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 29, 2019

Mr. HASTINGS (for himself, Mr. WOODALL, Mr. NADLER, Mr. COHEN, Mr. GREEN of Texas, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Ms. OMAR, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mr. SOTO, Mr. HARDER of California, Ms. NORTON, Mr. MEEKS, Ms. WILD, Mrs. HAYES, and Ms. CLARKE of New York) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

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## A BILL

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to increase civics education programs, 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 “Civics Learning Act  
5 of 2019”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1           (1) The dearth of civics lessons available to stu-  
2           dents across the United States has helped to foster  
3           a political climate that is deeply partisan and di-  
4           vided.

5           (2) Polarized party politics in the United States  
6           has fractured public morale in our institutions and  
7           has created an environment in which people are less  
8           likely to be well-informed on the current state of af-  
9           fairs and to participate in the political process.

10          (3) According to the Annenberg Constitution  
11          Day Civics Survey conducted by the Annenberg Pub-  
12          lic Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania—

13                (A) in 2018, only 32 percent of people in  
14                the United States surveyed were capable of  
15                naming all 3 branches of Government, while 33  
16                percent of Americans were not able to name  
17                any of the branches of government;

18                (B) in 2018, 30 percent of people in the  
19                United States surveyed knew that the Senate is  
20                in charge of Supreme Court nominee confirma-  
21                tions; and

22                (C) in 2017, 37 percent could not name  
23                any of the rights guaranteed under the First  
24                Amendment.

1           (4) In 2014, only 23 percent of eighth graders  
 2           were found to have performed at or above the pro-  
 3           ficient level on the National Assessment of Edu-  
 4           cational Progress civics exam conducted by the Na-  
 5           tional Center of Education Studies.

6           (5) A lack of knowledge on the basics of the  
 7           structure of our democratic republic creates an in-  
 8           creasingly ill-prepared electorate which overtime has,  
 9           and will continue to, contribute to a weakened de-  
 10          mocracy.

11 **SEC. 3. AMENDMENTS TO THE ELEMENTARY AND SEC-**  
 12 **ONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1965.**

13           Section 2233 of the Elementary and Secondary Edu-  
 14          cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6663) is amended—

15           (1) in subsection (a)—

16                   (A) by inserting “and prioritize innovative  
 17                   civics learning and teaching, including by en-  
 18                   couraging” after “to encourage”; and

19                   (B) by inserting “(including students and  
 20                   teachers at high-need schools (as defined in sec-  
 21                   tion 2221))” before the period;

22           (2) in subsection (b)—

23                   (A) by inserting “and appropriated under  
 24                   subsection (h) of this section” after  
 25                   “2231(b)(2)”; and

1 (B) by striking paragraph (2) and insert-  
2 ing the following:

3 “(2) may include—

4 “(A) hands-on civic engagement activities  
5 for teachers and students;

6 “(B) activities about the history and prin-  
7 ciples of the Constitution of the United States,  
8 including the Bill of Rights;

9 “(C) before-school, during-school, after-  
10 school, and extracurricular activities;

11 “(D) activities that include service learning  
12 and community service projects that are linked  
13 to school curriculum;

14 “(E) activities that encourage and support  
15 student participation in school governance; and

16 “(F) online and video game based learn-  
17 ing.”;

18 (3) in subsection (c), by striking paragraph (3)  
19 and inserting the following:

20 “(3) DIVERSITY OF PROJECTS.—

21 “(A) DIVERSITY OF GRANTS.—In awarding  
22 grants under this section, the Secretary shall  
23 ensure that, to the extent practicable, grants  
24 are distributed among eligible entities that will  
25 serve geographically diverse areas, including

1 urban, suburban, and rural areas, and public el-  
2 ementary schools.

3 “(B) ALLOCATION OF GRANT FUNDING.—

4 To the extent practicable based on the applica-  
5 tions received under subsection (d), the Sec-  
6 retary shall ensure that—

7 “(i) not less than 30 percent of the  
8 grant funds under this section are awarded  
9 to eligible entities that serve elementary  
10 school students and teachers;

11 “(ii) not less than 30 percent of the  
12 grant funds under this section are awarded  
13 to eligible entities that serve middle school  
14 students and teachers; and

15 “(iii) not more than 40 percent of the  
16 grant funds under this section are awarded  
17 to eligible entities that serve high school  
18 students and teachers.”;

19 (4) in subsection (d), by inserting “, and con-  
20 taining such information,” after “manner”; and

21 (5) by adding at the end the following:

22 “(f) GRANT AWARD PREFERENCE.—In awarding  
23 grants under this section, the Secretary shall give pref-  
24 erence to applications for programs that carry out the ac-

1 tivities listed in subsection (b)(2) for the purpose of  
2 strengthening civics education and learning.

3 “(g) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after  
4 the end of each fiscal year, the Secretary shall submit to  
5 the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of  
6 Representatives and the Committee on Health, Education,  
7 Labor, and Pensions of the Senate a report containing—

8 “(1) a description of each eligible entity award-  
9 ed a grant under this section during the preceding  
10 fiscal year;

11 “(2) a description of whether each such eligible  
12 entity was able to met each of the purposes under  
13 subsection (a), and if so, how such eligible entity  
14 was able to meet such purposes; and

15 “(3) any recommendations for continuation of  
16 the grant program under this section.

17 “(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—In ad-  
18 dition to the amounts reserved under section 2231(b)(2),  
19 there are authorized to be appropriated \$30,000,000 to  
20 carry out this section for fiscal year 2020.”.

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