

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2021 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED
Committee on Education

SB 146 — Civic Literacy Education

by Senator Brandes

This bill requires the Commissioner of Education to develop minimum criteria for a civic literacy practicum that helps students evaluate the roles, rights, and responsibilities of United States citizens and identify effective methods of active participation in society, government, and the political system.

The bill authorizes the practicum to be incorporated into a school's curriculum for a high school United States Government course, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year. The bill requires the practicum to provide students with an opportunity to be civically engaged through:

- Participation in an unpaid internship at a governmental entity;
- A series of simulations or observations of governmental entities performing their specified core functions in relation to the public; or
- Learning about the United States naturalization process and attending a United States citizenship naturalization oath ceremony.

The bill specifies that the practicum must require a student to complete a research paper including specified components. The bill further allows hours outside of classroom instruction that a student devotes to a qualifying unpaid civic engagement activity to count toward the community service requirements for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. The bill encourages school districts to include and accept civic literacy practicum activities and hours toward requirements for academic awards, especially awards including community service.

The bill creates the Citizen Scholar Program within the University of South Florida (USF), to be headquartered at the Center for Civic Engagement at USF St. Petersburg. The bill authorizes, subject to appropriation, USF St. Petersburg to contract with the YMCA to provide students participating in the YMCA Youth and Government program the opportunity to be designated Citizen Scholars and earn undergraduate credit.

The bill requires the Citizen Scholar Program to:

- Combine academic instruction with the implementation of concepts learned in the classroom into the local community to improve civic literacy.
- Provide students with opportunities to deepen their knowledge of American democracy and improve civil discourse.

The bill authorizes high school students completing the program to receive up to 6 undergraduate credit hours and be known as Citizen Scholars.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2021.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 114-0