

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

Provide limited government – This bill places a detailed mandate on local school districts to include specific topics in their instruction on U.S. history.

Safeguard individual liberty – The bill is intended to inculcate in public school students a better understanding of the history and foundations of individual liberty.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Required Instruction in U.S. History

Section 1003.43(1)(d) requires successful completion of one credit in American history for high school graduation. In addition, school districts are required by law to provide appropriate instruction designed to ensure students meet the SBE adopted standards in specified subjects, including social studies. The current standards cover American history topics and requirements.

Section 1003.42, F.S. requires school districts to provide instruction in a number of specified topics, including:

- The Declaration of Independence,
- The United States Constitution, and
- The history of the state.

The bill specifies in greater detail the following additional requirements for the instruction in certain U.S. history topics:

- Instruction on the Declaration of Independence must address its history and must include the ideas of national sovereignty, natural law, self-evident truth, equality of all persons, limited government, popular sovereignty, and God-given, inalienable rights of life, liberty, and property.
- Instruction in the U.S. Constitution must include the history, meaning, significance and effect of its provisions, with emphasis on the Bill of Rights.
- Instruction in the history of the state must also include the history of the State Constitution.

The bill adds a requirement for instruction in U.S. history which must:

- Include the period of discovery, early colonies, the War for Independence, Reconstruction, the Civil War, the expansion of the U.S., the world wars, and the civil rights movement;
- Be taught in a factual manner based on genuine history.

Other Required Instruction

The bill requires that the materials used for required instruction meet the highest standards for professionalism and historic accuracy.

Comprehensive health education is currently required to address mental and emotional health. The bill removes the requirement for instruction in mental and emotional health.

The bill adds a new requirement of instruction in the nature and importance of free enterprise to the U.S. economy.

Character-development programs are currently required. The bill amends the requirements for the content of such programs. The bill deletes the requirement that such programs stress attentiveness, patience and initiative. The bill adds requirements that the programs stress:

- The Golden Rule,
- Respect specifically for authority, human life, liberty, and personal property, and
- Specifically racial, ethnic, and religious tolerance.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Amends s.1003.42, F.S., revising several provisions related to required instruction in public schools and to provide requirements for the teaching and assessment of the history of the United States.

Section 2. Amends s. 1003.43, F.S., requiring the study of the Declaration of Independence for high school graduation.

Section 3. Amends s. 1002.20, F.S., correcting a cross reference.

Section 4. Provides an effective date of July 1, 2006.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on local government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on the private sector.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

There could be a fiscal impact related to the requirement that standards and assessments adopted by the State Board of Education comport with the bill's specific content requirements.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

This bill does not appear to require counties or municipalities to spend funds or take action requiring the expenditure of funds.

This bill does not reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenues in the aggregate.

This bill does not reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties and municipalities.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

The requirement that high schools provide instruction in specific U.S. history topics in two grade levels conflicts with current requirements for one credit in U.S. history. Currently, United States history in middle school is designed as a one-year course. There are no current state time requirements for instruction in United States history at the elementary level.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE & COMBINED BILL CHANGES