

By Senator Diaz de la Portilla

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20121462

1                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to American Founders' Month; providing  
3           a short title; creating s. 683.147, F.S.; designating  
4           the month of September as "American Founders' Month";  
5           authorizing the Governor to annually issue a  
6           proclamation designating the month and urging  
7           participation; amending s. 1003.44, F.S.; requiring  
8           district school boards to celebrate the American  
9           Founders and the principles inherent in the country's  
10          founding documents by observing American Founders'  
11          Month; specifying the focus of instruction during the  
12          month; providing that instruction may be integrated  
13          into the existing school curriculum; requiring  
14          distribution to school personnel of certain  
15          information; providing an effective date.

16  
17 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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19       Section 1. This act may be cited as the "American Founders'  
20 Month Act."

21       Section 2. Section 683.147, Florida Statutes, is created to  
22 read:

23       683.147 American Founders' Month.—

24       (1) The month of September of each year is designated as  
25 "American Founders' Month."

26       (2) The Governor may annually issue a proclamation  
27 designating the month of September as "American Founders' Month"  
28 and urging all civic, fraternal, and religious organizations and  
29 public and private educational institutions to recognize and

36-01255-12

20121462

30 observe this occasion through appropriate programs, meetings,  
31 services, or celebrations in which state, county, and local  
32 governmental officials are invited to participate.

33 Section 3. Subsection (2) of section 1003.44, Florida  
34 Statutes, is amended, and subsections (3) and (4) are added to  
35 that section, to read:

36 1003.44 Patriotic programs; rules.—

37 (2) Each district school board may allow any teacher or  
38 administrator to read, or to post in a public school building or  
39 classroom or at any school-related event, any excerpt or portion  
40 of the following historic material: the national motto; the  
41 national anthem; the pledge of allegiance; the Constitution of  
42 the State of Florida, including the Preamble; the Constitution  
43 of the United States, including the Preamble; the Bill of  
44 Rights; the Declaration of Independence; the Mayflower Compact;  
45 the Emancipation Proclamation; the writings, speeches,  
46 documents, and proclamations of the presidents of the United  
47 States, the signers of the Constitution of the United States and  
48 the Declaration of Independence, and civil rights leaders; and  
49 decisions of the United States Supreme Court. However, any  
50 material that is read, posted, or taught pursuant to this  
51 provision may be presented only from a historical perspective  
52 and in a nonproselytizing manner. When less than an entire  
53 document is used, the excerpt or portion must include as much  
54 material as is reasonably necessary to reflect the sentiment of  
55 the entire document and avoid expressing statements out of the  
56 context in which they were originally made. If the material  
57 refers to laws or judicial decisions that have been superseded,  
58 the material must be accompanied by a statement indicating that

36-01255-12

20121462

59 such law or decision is no longer the law of the land. No  
60 material shall be selected to advance a particular religious,  
61 political, or sectarian purpose. ~~The department shall distribute~~  
62 ~~a copy of this section to each district school board, whereupon~~  
63 ~~each district school superintendent shall distribute a copy to~~  
64 ~~all teachers and administrators.~~

65 (3) (a) Each district school board shall celebrate the  
66 American Founders and the principles inherent in the country's  
67 founding documents by observing American Founders' Month in  
68 September of each year as provided in s. 683.147. This month may  
69 be coordinated with Celebrate Freedom Week, which is observed  
70 pursuant to s. 1003.421.

71 (b) During American Founders' Month, students may be  
72 provided instruction that focuses on:

73 1. The leading figures present at the country's founding  
74 who were instrumental in crafting the founding documents that  
75 institutionalized individual liberty and limited government that  
76 derives its power from the consent of the governed.

77 2. The moral and civic virtue, self-sacrifice, intellectual  
78 genius, and patriotism demonstrated by the country's founding  
79 fathers.

80 3. The founding documents, including, but not limited to,  
81 the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United  
82 States, the Bill of Rights, and the Federalist Papers.

83 4. The historical and philosophical importance of the  
84 Declaration of Independence with its emphasis that all people  
85 "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights,  
86 that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of  
87 happiness."

36-01255-12

20121462

88       5. The principles inherent in the founding documents,  
89 including, but not limited to, individual freedom, equality,  
90 limited representative government, a free market system, civic  
91 virtue, natural law, and self-evident truth.

92       (c) The instruction may be integrated into the existing  
93 school curriculum through methods including, but not limited to,  
94 supplementing lesson plans, holding school assemblies, or  
95 providing school-related activities.

96       (4) The department shall distribute a copy of this section  
97 to each district school board, whereupon each district school  
98 superintendent shall distribute a copy to all school  
99 administrators and instructional personnel at the beginning of  
100 each school year.

101       Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2012.