

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to speech and debate education;
3 creating s. 683.221, F.S.; designating Florida Speech
4 and Debate Week annually in February; providing
5 purposes for the annual observance; authorizing
6 specified entities to observe Florida Speech and
7 Debate Week; creating s. 1000.09, F.S.; subject to
8 legislative appropriation, establishing the Florida
9 Debate Initiative, Inc., (FDI) as a statewide speech
10 and debate organization that performs certain
11 functions in support of the Florida Civics and Debate
12 Initiative (FCDI) in the Department of Education;
13 providing the duties of the FDI; providing
14 construction; authorizing the FDI to establish and
15 maintain certain partnerships; specifying activities
16 for the FDI and FCDI; providing authorized uses of
17 funds for the FDI; requiring the FDI to publish a
18 report online and submit the report to the department
19 annually by a specified date; specifying requirements
20 for the report; requiring the FCDI to annually provide
21 certain data to the FDI by a specified date; providing
22 an effective date.

23
24 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
25

26 **Section 1. Section 683.221, Florida Statutes, is created**
27 **to read:**

28 683.221 Florida Speech and Debate Week.—

29 (1) February 1 through February 7 shall be annually
30 designated as "Florida Speech and Debate Week."

31 (2) Florida Speech and Debate Week shall be observed for
32 all of the following purposes:

33 (a) To recognize the academic, civic, and leadership value
34 of competitive speech and debate.

35 (b) To honor educators, coaches, judges, and school
36 districts that support debate programming.

37 (c) To inspire students statewide to participate in debate
38 as a pathway to civic engagement.

39 (d) To promote Florida's role as the national leader in
40 scholastic speech and debate.

41 (3) Public and charter schools, state agencies, and other
42 entities may observe Florida Speech and Debate Week.

43 **Section 2. Section 1000.09, Florida Statutes, is created**
44 **to read:**

45 1000.09 Competitive speech and debate.—

46 (1) CREATION, DESIGNATION, AND RESPONSIBILITIES.—Subject
47 to legislative appropriation and in alignment with, and in
48 support of, the Department of Education and the program it
49 operates called the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative (FCDI),
50 the Florida Debate Initiative, Inc., (FDI) is established as

51 this state's nonprofit statewide speech and debate organization
52 that manages, develops, and expands K-20 civics, speech, and
53 debate programs.

54 (a)1. The FDI shall support and expand access to statewide
55 civic literacy and speech and debate programs by undertaking the
56 following, which list is not exhaustive:

57 a. Educating and training coaches and students.

58 b. Training judges and volunteers.

59 c. Promoting educational competition opportunities.

60 d. Leading training and leadership development
61 experiences.

62 e. Establishing competition standards.

63 f. Maintaining statewide data reporting.

64 g. Assisting the FCDI, upon its request, in civics-focused
65 education, training, and programming initiatives.

66 2. This paragraph may not be construed to prohibit
67 schools, districts, or students from participating in civics,
68 speech and debate activities, leagues, or competitions not
69 operated or supervised by the FDI.

70 (b) The FDI may establish and maintain partnerships with
71 school districts, charter schools, state agencies, postsecondary
72 institutions, nonprofit organizations, private entities, and
73 national or international organizations to achieve the purposes
74 of this section, including collaborative efforts with the FCDI.
75 In such collaboration:

76 1. The FCDI and FDI shall jointly host and operate the
77 annual National Civics and Debate Championship known as The
78 Great Debate, a nationally recognized synthesis of civics
79 education and debate competition that challenges students' civic
80 knowledge, debate skills, and endurance through multi-day,
81 multi-event competition.

82 2. The FCDI shall lead specific civics immersion events,
83 including FCDI Day at the Capitol and the Great American Civics
84 Challenge, which includes the Ronald Reagan Presidential Debates
85 and the We The People Civics Showdown.

86 3. The FDI shall provide logistical support, debate
87 tournament operations support, and tournament coordination
88 support for The Great Debate and other collaborative initiatives
89 to advance statewide speech and debate opportunities.

90 (2) AUTHORIZED USES OF FUNDS.—The FDI may expend program
91 funds on all of the following:

92 (a) Administrative operations, including staffing,
93 insurance, compliance, reporting, and statewide infrastructure.

94 (b) Programmatic operations, including curriculum,
95 training, summer programs, workshops, camps, and mentorship
96 programs.

97 (c) Tournament operations, including logistics, staff,
98 judge training, technology, awards, and regional team
99 operations.

100 (d) Travel, lodging, training, and transportation for

101 participants, including local, state, and national travel to
102 competitions hosted by the FDI, FCDI, or other civics, speech,
103 and debate organizations.

104 (e) Public-private partnership development, including
105 sponsorship and philanthropic support.

106 (f) Memberships, affiliations, and participation fees
107 related to civics education, speech, debate, leadership, and
108 academic competition programs, provided such memberships,
109 affiliations, and participation advance the purposes of this
110 section.

111 (3) REPORTING.—The FDI shall make publicly available
112 online and submit, no later than December 31 of each year, an
113 annual report to the Department of Education which includes all
114 of the following:

115 (a) Student participation in statewide FDI programs, by
116 district and demographics.

117 (b) The number of active student teams in statewide FDI
118 speech and debate programs.

119 (c) Competitive and educational outcomes of statewide FDI
120 programs.

121 (d) A categorized summary of all expenditures.

122
123 No later than November 1 of each year, the FCDI shall provide
124 the FDI with the FCDI's most current reporting and data
125 regarding paragraphs (a)-(d) above in order for the FDI to

126 | accurately report on the outcomes and expenditures related to
127 | any joint programming.

128 | **Section 3.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.