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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate

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House

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03/04/2026 10:39 AM

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Senator Brodeur moved the following:

Senate Amendment (with title amendment)

Delete everything after the enacting clause
and insert:

Section 1. Section 265.0042, Florida Statutes, is created
to read:

265.0042 Florida Speech and Debate Hall of Fame.-

(1) There is created the Florida Speech and Debate Hall of
Fame. The Department of Management Services shall set aside an
area on the Plaza Level of the Capitol Building and shall
consult with the Florida Education Foundation and the



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12 Commissioner of Education regarding the design and theme of the
13 area.

14 (2) The hall of fame shall do all of the following:

15 (a) Honor distinguished students, coaches, educators,
16 alumni, veterans, public servants, benefactors, and supporters
17 who have elevated speech and debate in this state.

18 (b) Preserve the history, impact, and cultural significance
19 of competitive debate.

20 (c) Inspire future generations of Florida students to
21 pursue speech, debate, public leadership, and civic excellence.

22 (3) The hall of fame shall convene a committee to establish
23 procedures to nominate and select individuals to be featured.

24 Section 2. Section 683.221, Florida Statutes, is created to
25 read:

26 683.221 Florida Speech and Debate Week.—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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41 Section 3. Section 1000.09, Florida Statutes, is created to
42 read:

43 1000.09 Competitive speech and debate.-

44 (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.-

45 (a) The Legislature finds that speech and debate
46 significantly improve literacy, critical thinking, research
47 ability, civic knowledge, and leadership for students of this
48 state.

49 (b) The Legislature also finds that this state's civics and
50 debate expansion has become a national model, increasing access
51 to this instruction in all regions. Sustaining and improving
52 this success requires a permanent statewide organization with
53 specialized expertise, program capacity, and year-round
54 operational support.

55 (c) The Legislature further finds that the Florida Debate
56 Initiative has demonstrated statewide effectiveness and is
57 uniquely positioned to ensure continuity, equitable access,
58 quality programming, tournament infrastructure, and
59 instructional rigor.

60 (d) It is the intent of the Legislature to establish a
61 comprehensive statewide infrastructure, under the Florida Debate
62 Initiative's direction, which expands, supports, and elevates K-
63 20 speech and debate education.

64 (2) CREATION, DESIGNATION, AND RESPONSIBILITIES.-In
65 alignment with, and in support of, the Department of Education
66 and the program it operates called the Florida Civics and Debate
67 Initiative (FCDI), the Florida Debate Initiative, Inc., (FDI) is
68 established as this state's nonprofit statewide speech and
69 debate organization that manages, develops, and expands K-20



70 civics, speech, and debate programs.

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

- 74 a. Educating and training coaches and students.
- 75 b. Training judges and volunteers.
- 76 c. Promoting educational competition opportunities.
- 77 d. Leading training and leadership development experiences.
- 78 e. Establishing competition standards.
- 79 f. Maintaining statewide data reporting.
- 80 g. Assisting the FCDI, upon request, in civics-focused
81 education, training, and programming initiatives.

82 2. This paragraph may not be construed to prohibit schools,
83 districts, or students from participating in civics, speech and
84 debate activities, leagues, or competitions not operated or
85 supervised by FDI.

86 (b) FDI may establish and maintain partnerships with school
87 districts, charter schools, state agencies, postsecondary
88 institutions, nonprofit organizations, private entities, and
89 national or international organizations to achieve the purposes
90 of this section, including collaborative efforts with FCDI. In
91 such collaboration:

92 1. FCDI and FDI shall jointly host and operate the annual
93 National Civics and Debate Championship known as The Great
94 Debate, a nationally recognized synthesis of civics education
95 and debate competition that challenges students' civic
96 knowledge, debate skills, and endurance through multi-day,
97 multi-event competition.

98 2. FCDI shall lead specific civics immersion events,



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99 including FCDI Day at the Capitol and the Great American Civics
100 Challenge, which includes the Ronald Reagan Presidential Debates
101 and the We The People Civics Showdown.

102 3. FDI shall provide logistical support, debate tournament
103 operations support, and tournament coordination support for The
104 Great Debate and other collaborative initiatives to advance
105 statewide speech and debate opportunities.

106 (3) AUTHORIZED USES OF FUNDS.—FDI may expend program funds
107 on all of the following:

108 (a) Administrative operations, including staffing,
109 insurance, compliance, reporting, and statewide infrastructure.

110 (b) Programmatic operations, including curriculum,
111 training, summer programs, workshops, camps, and mentorship
112 programs.

113 (c) Tournament operations, including logistics, staff,
114 judge training, technology, awards, and regional team
115 operations.

116 (d) Travel, lodging, training, and transportation for
117 participants, including local, state, and national travel to
118 competitions hosted by FDI, FCDI, or other civics, speech, and
119 debate organizations.

120 (e) Public-private partnership development, including
121 sponsorship and philanthropic support.

122 (f) Memberships, affiliations, and participation fees
123 related to civics education, speech, debate, leadership, and
124 academic competition programs, provided such memberships,
125 affiliations, and participation advance the purposes of this
126 section.

127 (4) REPORTING.—FDI shall make publicly available online and



128 submit, no later than December 31 of each year, an annual report
129 to the Department of Education which includes all of the
130 following:

131 (a) Student participation in statewide FDI programs, by
132 district and demographics.

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

135 (c) Competitive and educational outcomes of statewide FDI
136 programs.

137 (d) A categorized summary of all expenditures.

138 (5) ENDORSEMENT IN SPEECH AND DEBATE.—Pursuant to s.
139 1012.56 and State Board of Education rule, a certified teacher
140 may earn an endorsement in speech and debate if he or she
141 demonstrates all of the following:

142 (a) Completion of coursework approved by the board in
143 argumentation, rhetoric, communication, or debate instruction.

144 (b) Completion of professional development offered by FDI
145 or equivalent professional development offered by a Florida
146 College System institution or state university.

147 (c) Competency, as determined by the board, in the rules,
148 events, and competitive standards of scholastic debate.

149 (6) REGIONAL TRAVELING DEBATE TEAMS.—The department shall
150 collaborate with FDI to establish regional traveling debate
151 teams to represent Florida in national competitions. Teams must
152 be accessible to students at Title I and rural schools. Teams
153 must provide competitive training and coaching for speech and
154 debate.

155 (a) All travel costs may be covered through legislative
156 appropriation, public-private partnerships, and sponsorships.



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157 (b) A school district may use school buses to transport
158 students to and from speech and debate competitions.

159 Section 4. Present subsection (29) of section 1001.42,
160 Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (30), and a new
161 subsection (29) is added to that section, to read:

162 1001.42 Powers and duties of district school board.—The
163 district school board, acting as a board, shall exercise all
164 powers and perform all duties listed below:

165 (29) SPEECH AND DEBATE COMPETITION REPORTING.—Each district
166 school board shall annually make available online and submit to
167 the Department of Education, by a date set by the department, a
168 report that includes all of the following information:

169 (a) The number of active speech and debate teams.

170 (b) Student participation rates.

171 (c) Competitive performance and public service engagement.

172 (d) Transportation, facilities, and administrative support
173 provided.

174 (e) Resources needed to expand the program.

175 Section 5. Section 1004.0983, Florida Statutes, is created
176 to read:

177 1004.0983 Speech and debate training pathways.—The Board of
178 Governors and the State Board of Education shall develop
179 undergraduate and graduate coursework, certificates, and micro-
180 credentials in speech and debate education, coaching, and
181 tournament operations.

182 (1) Coursework may include all of the following:

183 (a) Rhetoric, argumentation, and communication theory.

184 (b) Coaching methods and competitive event instruction.

185 (c) Tournament management and adjudication.



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186 (d) Public speaking pedagogy.

187 (2) The Board of Governors and the State Board of Education
188 may collaborate with the Florida Debate Initiative, Inc., to
189 develop coursework.

190 Section 6. The Department of Education shall approve
191 courses developed pursuant to s. 1004.0983, Florida Statutes,
192 for inclusion in dual enrollment programs under s. 1007.271,
193 Florida Statutes.

194 Section 7. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$2.4
195 million in recurring funds is appropriated from the General
196 Revenue Fund to support the Florida Debate Initiative, Inc.'s
197 responsibilities assigned under s. 1000.09(1), Florida Statutes,
198 including administrative, programmatic, and tournament operation
199 duties.

200 Section 8. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

201
202 ===== T I T L E A M E N D M E N T =====

203 And the title is amended as follows:

204 Delete everything before the enacting clause
205 and insert:

206 A bill to be entitled
207 An act relating to speech and debate education;
208 creating s. 265.0042, F.S.; creating the Florida
209 Speech and Debate Hall of Fame; requiring the
210 Department of Management Services to set aside an area
211 in the Capitol Building for the hall of fame;
212 requiring the department to consult with the Florida
213 Education Foundation and the Commissioner of
214 Education; providing the duties for the hall of fame;



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215 requiring the hall of fame to convene a committee for
216 specified purposes; creating s. 683.221, F.S.;

217 designating Florida Speech and Debate Week annually in
218 February; providing purposes for the annual
219 observance; authorizing specified entities to observe
220 Florida Speech and Debate Week; creating s. 1000.09,
221 F.S.; providing legislative findings and intent;
222 establishing the Florida Debate Initiative, Inc.,
223 (FDI) as a statewide speech and debate organization
224 that performs certain functions in support of the
225 Florida Civics and Debate Initiative (FCDI) in the
226 Department of Education; providing the duties of FDI;
227 providing construction; authorizing FDI to establish
228 and maintain certain partnerships; specifying
229 activities for FDI and FCDI; providing authorized uses
230 of funds for FDI; requiring FDI to publish online and
231 submit annually by a specified date to the department
232 a specified report; specifying requirements for the
233 report; authorizing a certified teacher to earn an
234 endorsement in speech and debate; specifying
235 requirements for the endorsement; requiring the
236 department to collaborate with FDI to establish
237 regional traveling debate teams; authorizing a school
238 district to use school buses to transport students to
239 speech and debate competitions; amending s. 1001.42,
240 F.S.; requiring each district school board annually to
241 publish online and submit to the department a report;
242 specifying requirements for the report; creating s.
243 1004.0983, F.S.; requiring the Board of Governors of



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244 the State University System and the State Board of
245 Education to develop specified undergraduate and
246 graduate coursework, certificates, and micro-
247 credentials; authorizing the Board of Governors and
248 the State Board of Education to collaborate with FDI
249 to develop coursework; requiring the department to
250 approve specified dual enrollment courses; providing
251 an appropriation; providing an effective date.