

By Senator Brodeur

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30 F.S.; requiring each district school board annually to
31 publish online and submit to the department a report;
32 specifying requirements for the report; amending s.
33 1002.37, F.S.; requiring the Florida Virtual School to
34 establish the Institute for Speech and Debate
35 Innovation; providing duties of the institute;
36 creating s. 1004.0983, F.S.; requiring the Board of
37 Governors of the State University System and the State
38 Board of Education to develop specified undergraduate
39 and graduate coursework, certificates, and micro-
40 credentials; authorizing the Board of Governors and
41 the State Board of Education to collaborate with FDI
42 to develop coursework; requiring the department to
43 approve specified dual enrollment courses; providing
44 appropriations; providing an effective date.
45

46 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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48 Section 1. This act may be cited as the "Florida Speech and
49 Debate Education Act."

50 Section 2. Section 265.0042, Florida Statutes, is created
51 to read:

52 265.0042 Florida Speech and Debate Hall of Fame.—

53 (1) There is created the Florida Speech and Debate Hall of
54 Fame. The Department of Management Services shall set aside an
55 area on the Plaza Level of the Capitol Building and shall
56 consult with the Florida Education Foundation and the
57 Commissioner of Education regarding the design and theme of the
58 area.

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59 (2) The hall of fame shall do all of the following:
60 (a) Honor distinguished students, coaches, educators,
61 alumni, veterans, public servants, benefactors, and supporters
62 who have elevated speech and debate in this state.
63 (b) Preserve the history, impact, and cultural significance
64 of competitive debate.

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

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

69 Section 3. Section 683.221, Florida Statutes, is created to
70 read:

71 683.221 Florida Speech and Debate Week.—

72 (1) The week that includes the first Tuesday of November
73 shall be designated as "Florida Speech and Debate Week."

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

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

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

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

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

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

86 Section 4. Section 1000.09, Florida Statutes, is created to
87 read:

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88 1000.09 Competitive speech and debate.—

89 (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS.—

90 (a) The Legislature finds that speech and debate
91 significantly improve literacy, critical thinking, research
92 ability, civic knowledge, and leadership for students of this
93 state.

94 (b) The Legislature also finds that this state's civics and
95 debate expansion has become a national model, increasing access
96 to this instruction in all regions. Sustaining and improving
97 this success requires a permanent statewide organization with
98 specialized expertise, program capacity, and year-round
99 operational support.

100 (c) The Legislature further finds that the Florida Debate
101 Initiative has demonstrated statewide effectiveness and is
102 uniquely positioned to ensure continuity, equitable access,
103 quality programming, tournament infrastructure, and
104 instructional rigor. It is the intent of the Legislature to
105 establish a comprehensive statewide infrastructure, under the
106 Florida Debate Initiative's direction, that expands, supports,
107 and elevates K-20 speech and debate education.

108 (2) CREATION, DESIGNATION, AND RESPONSIBILITIES.—The
109 Florida Debate Initiative, Inc., (FDI) is designated as the
110 official statewide speech and debate organization responsible
111 for managing, developing, and expanding K-20 speech and debate
112 programs.

113 (b) FDI shall do all of the following:

114 1. Manage the official Florida Speech and Debate League and
115 its regional teams.

116 2. Establish statewide competition rules, ballots, judging

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117 standards, and tournament calendars.

118 3. Operate or supervise district, regional, and state
tournaments.

120 4. Train and certify coaches, judges, volunteers, and
tournament staff.

122 5. Provide statewide programmatic support, including
student programs, educator training, and public service
initiatives.

125 6. Maintain statewide data reporting and annual
accountability.

127 7. Work constructively with nonstate-sanctioned leagues
while upholding Florida's civic and patriotic development goals.

129 (3) STATEWIDE PROGRAMS.—FDI shall implement and maintain a
130 comprehensive suite of statewide programs, including all of the
131 following:

132 (a) Student speech and debate programs.

133 (b) Student leadership and service programs.

134 (c) Competitive speech and debate training for students.

135 (d) Educator training.

136 (e) Postsecondary and workforce internships.

137 (f) Operation of speech and debate tournaments.

138 (4) AUTHORIZED USES OF FUNDS.—FDI may expend program funds
139 on all of the following:

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

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

145 (c) Tournament operations, including logistics, staff,

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146 judge training, technology, awards, and regional team
147 operations.

148 (d) Travel, lodging, training, and transportation for
149 participants.

150 (e) Public-private partnership development, including
151 sponsorship and philanthropic support.

152 (5) ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING.—FDI shall make publicly
153 available online and submit, no later than December 31, an
154 annual report to the Department of Education which includes all
155 of the following:

156 (a) Student participation in statewide programs, by
157 district and demographics.

158 (b) The number of active student teams in statewide speech
159 and debate programs.

160 (c) Competitive and educational outcomes of statewide
161 programs.

162 (d) A categorized summary of all expenditures.

163 (6) ENDORSEMENT IN SPEECH AND DEBATE.—Pursuant to s.
164 1012.56 and State Board of Education rule, a certified teacher
165 may earn an endorsement in speech and debate if he or she
166 demonstrates all of the following:

167 (a) Completion of coursework approved by the state board in
168 argumentation, rhetoric, communication, or debate instruction.

169 (b) Completion of professional development offered by the
170 FDI or equivalent professional development offered by a Florida
171 College System institution or state university.

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

174 (7) REGIONAL TRAVELING DEBATE TEAMS.—The department shall

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175 collaborate with FDI to establish regional traveling debate
176 teams to represent Florida in national competitions. Teams must
177 be accessible to students at Title I and rural schools. Teams
178 must provide competitive training and coaching for speech and
179 debate.

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

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

184 Section 5. Present subsection (29) of section 1001.42,
185 Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (30), and a new
186 subsection (29) is added to that section, to read:

187 1001.42 Powers and duties of district school board.—The
188 district school board, acting as a board, shall exercise all
189 powers and perform all duties listed below:

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

194 (a) The number of active speech and debate teams.
195 (b) Student participation rates.
196 (c) Competitive performance and public service engagement.
197 (d) Transportation, facilities, and administrative support
198 provided.

199 (e) Resources needed to expand the program.

200 Section 6. Present subsection (11) of section 1002.37,
201 Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (12), and a new
202 subsection (11) is added to that section, to read:

203 1002.37 The Florida Virtual School.—

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204 (11) The Florida Virtual School shall establish the
205 Institute for Speech and Debate Innovation (ISDI). The ISDI
206 shall do all of the following:

207 (1) Develop online curriculum, micro-credentials, and
208 instructional modules for speech and debate.

209 (2) Create artificial intelligence-based coaching tools,
210 digital judging tutorials, and analytics dashboards.

211 (3) Produce virtual reality and augmented reality
212 simulations for competitive practice.

213 (4) Ensure equitable access for districts lacking onsite
214 coaching capacity.

215 Section 7. Section 1004.0983, Florida Statutes, is created
216 to read:

217 1004.0983 Speech and debate training pathways.—The Board of
218 Governors and the State Board of Education shall develop
219 undergraduate and graduate coursework, certificates, and micro-
220 credentials in speech and debate education, coaching, and
221 tournament operations.

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

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

224 (b) Coaching methods and competitive event instruction.

225 (c) Tournament management and adjudication.

226 (d) Public speaking pedagogy.

227 (2) The Board of Governors and the State Board of Education
228 may collaborate with the Florida Debate Initiative, Inc., to
229 develop coursework.

230 Section 8. The Department of Education shall approve
231 courses developed pursuant to s. 1004.0983, Florida Statutes,
232 for inclusion in dual enrollment programs under s. 1007.271,

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233 Florida Statutes.234 Section 9. (1) For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of:235 (a) \$2.4 million in recurring funds is appropriated from236 the General Revenue Fund to support the Florida Debate237 Initiative, Inc.'s responsibilities assigned under s.238 1000.09(4), Florida Statutes, including administrative,239 programmatic, and tournament operation duties.240 (b) \$250,000 in recurring funds is appropriated from the241 General Revenue Fund to support FDI's responsibilities assigned242 under s. 1000.09(7), Florida Statutes, including for regional243 traveling debate teams to support their training, coaching,244 lodging, and competition costs.245 (2) \$700,000 in recurring funds is appropriated from the246 General Revenue Fund to school districts for travel costs to247 attend speech and debate competitions pursuant to s. 1000.09,248 Florida Statutes.249 (3) \$500,000 in recurring funds is appropriated from the250 General Revenue Fund to the State Board of Education to develop251 the teacher endorsement under s. 1000.09(6), Florida Statutes,252 and to support the Florida Speech and Debate Hall of Fame under253 s. 265.0042, Florida Statutes.254 (4) \$750,000 in recurring funds is appropriated from the255 General Revenue Fund to the Florida Virtual School to support256 the Institute for Speech and Debate Innovation pursuant to s.257 1002.37(11), Florida Statutes.

258 Section 10. This act shall take effect January 1, 2027.