

By the Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education; the Committee on Education Pre-K - 12; and Senators Brodeur, Burgess, Gaetz, Osgood, and Massullo

602-02968-26

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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.; establishing
8 the Florida Debate Initiative, Inc., (FDI) as a
9 statewide speech and debate organization that performs
10 certain functions in support of the Florida Civics and
11 Debate Initiative (FCDI) in the Department of
12 Education; providing the duties of FDI; providing
13 construction; authorizing FDI to establish and
14 maintain certain partnerships; specifying activities
15 for FDI and FCDI; providing authorized uses of funds
16 for FDI; requiring FDI to publish online and submit
17 annually by a specified date to the Department of
18 Education a specified report; specifying requirements
19 for the report; requiring FCDI to provide certain data
20 to FDI by a specified date; providing an
21 appropriation; providing an effective date.

22
23 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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

27 683.221 Florida Speech and Debate Week.-

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

602-02968-26

20261062c2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

44 1000.09 Competitive speech and debate.-

45 (1) CREATION, DESIGNATION, AND RESPONSIBILITIES.-In
46 alignment with, and in support of, the Department of Education
47 and the program it operates called the Florida Civics and Debate
48 Initiative (FCDI), the Florida Debate Initiative, Inc., (FDI) is
49 established as this state's nonprofit statewide speech and
50 debate organization that manages, develops, and expands K-20
51 civics, speech, and debate programs.

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

55 a. Educating and training coaches and students.

56 b. Training judges and volunteers.

57 c. Promoting educational competition opportunities.

58 d. Leading training and leadership development experiences.

602-02968-26

20261062c2

59 e. Establishing competition standards.

60 f. Maintaining statewide data reporting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

87 (2) AUTHORIZED USES OF FUNDS.—FDI may expend program funds

602-02968-26

20261062c2

88 on all of the following:

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

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

94 (c) Tournament operations, including logistics, staff,
95 judge training, technology, awards, and regional team
96 operations.

97 (d) Travel, lodging, training, and transportation for
98 participants, including local, state, and national travel to
99 competitions hosted by the FDI, FCDI, or other civics, speech,
100 and debate organizations.

101 (e) Public-private partnership development, including
102 sponsorship and philanthropic support.

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

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

112 (a) Student participation in statewide FDI programs, by
113 district and demographics.

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

116 (c) Competitive and educational outcomes of statewide FDI

602-02968-26

20261062c2

117 programs.

118 (d) A categorized summary of all expenditures.

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120 No later than November 1 of each year, the FCDI shall provide
121 the FDI with the FCDI's most current reporting and data
122 regarding paragraphs (a)-(d) above in order for the FDI to
123 accurately report on the outcomes and expenditures related to
124 any joint programming.

125 Section 3. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$2.4
126 million in recurring funds is appropriated from the General
127 Revenue Fund to support the Florida Debate Initiative, Inc.'s
128 responsibilities assigned under s. 1000.09(1), Florida Statutes,
129 including administrative, programmatic, and tournament operation
130 duties.

131 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.