

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Education Pre-K -12

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BILL: SB 420

INTRODUCER: Senator Burgess

SUBJECT: Patriotic Displays in Classrooms

DATE: January 12, 2026

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Sabitsch	Bouck	ED	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.	_____	_____	AED	_____
3.	_____	_____	RC	_____

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**I. Summary:**

SB 420 requires each school district to adopt rules to require the display of portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in each social studies classroom and in each kindergarten through grade-5 classroom.

The bill requires the Department of Education to select the portraits and make them available to each school district.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2026.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Patriotic Programs**

Florida law addresses patriotic programs in schools by allowing school districts to adopt rules to require programs of a patriotic nature to encourage greater respect for the government of the United States and its national anthem and flag.<sup>1</sup> The same law addresses behavior when the national anthem is played and requires that the pledge of allegiance be recited at the beginning of the day in all public elementary, middle and high schools in the state. A student's parent may request in writing that the student be excused from reciting the pledge.<sup>2</sup>

Each district school board may allow any teacher or administrator to read, or to post in a public school building or classroom or at any school-related event, any excerpt or portion of the following historic materials, subject to limitations specified in law:<sup>3</sup>

- The national motto;

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<sup>1</sup> Section 1003.44(1), F.S.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Section 1003.44(2), F.S.

- The national anthem;
- The pledge of allegiance;
- The Constitution of the State of Florida, including the Preamble;
- The Constitution of the United States, including the Preamble;
- The Bill of Rights;
- The Declaration of Independence;
- The Mayflower Compact;
- The Emancipation Proclamation;
- The writings, speeches, documents, and proclamations of the presidents of the United States, the signers of the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence, and civil rights leaders; and
- The decisions of the United States Supreme Court.

Florida law encourages all public schools within the state to coordinate, at all grade levels, instruction related to the nation's founding fathers during "American Founders' Month"<sup>4</sup> which is designated as the month of September each year.<sup>5</sup>

Florida law requires the DOE to assist stakeholders in preparing students to be civically responsible and knowledgeable adults in the following ways:<sup>6</sup>

- Develop or approve an integrated civic education curriculum that school districts and charter schools are required to incorporate as part of regular schoolwork in kindergarten through grade 12. The curriculum must assist students in developing:
  - An understanding of their shared rights and responsibilities as residents of the state and of the founding principles of the United States.
  - A sense of civic pride and desire to participate regularly with government at the local, state, and federal levels.
  - An understanding of the process for effectively advocating before government bodies and officials.
  - An understanding of the civic-minded expectations, developed by the State Board of Education, of an upright and desirable citizenry that recognizes and accepts responsibility for preserving and defending the blessings of liberty inherited from prior generations and secured by the United States Constitution.
- Curate oral history resources to be used along with the civic education curriculum which provide portraits in patriotism based on the personal stories of diverse individuals who demonstrate civic-minded qualities. These resources constitute the Portraits in Patriotism Act.
- Approve integrated civic education curricula submitted by school districts and charter schools.

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<sup>4</sup> Section 683.145, F.S.

<sup>5</sup> Section 1003.44(3), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Section 1003.44(6), F.S.

## **School and Classroom Displays**

Each school district is required to adopt rules to require that all schools and buildings used by the school district display the state motto of “In God We Trust” in a conspicuous location.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, each public K-20 educational institution in Florida must display daily in each classroom the flag of the United States. The flag must be made in the United States, must be at least 2 feet by 3 feet, and must be properly displayed in accordance with applicable federal law. The principal, director, or president of each educational institution must attempt to acquire the flags through donations or fundraising for 1 year prior to securing other funding sources or allocating funds for the purchase of flags.<sup>8</sup>

## **George Washington and Abraham Lincoln**

George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are both iconic figures in American history that shaped the History of the United States of America.

### ***George Washington***

George Washington was an American general and commander in chief of the colonial armies during the American revolution and subsequently the first president of the United States of America, and is commonly referred to as the father of the nation.<sup>9</sup> He was born on February 22, 1732, in Westmoreland county, Virginia and died on December 14, 1799, at his home in Mount Vernon, Virginia at the age of 67.

### ***Abraham Lincoln***

Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president of the United States who preserved the Union during the American Civil War and brought about the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States of America earning him the nickname “The Great Emancipator.” He was born in 1809 in a one-room cabin near Hodgenville, Kentucky where his youth was marked by the struggles of frontier life and almost no formal education. Later in life he was self-educated and became a lawyer and public figure. Lincoln was assassinated at the Ford Theatre in Washington D.C. in 1865 at 56 years of age.<sup>10</sup>

## **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

SB 420 amends s. 1003.44, F.S., to require that portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are displayed in a conspicuous place in each public school classroom<sup>11</sup> that is primarily used for social studies instruction as well as in each classroom serving kindergarten through grade 5.

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<sup>7</sup> Section 1003.44(4), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 1000.06(2), F.S.

<sup>9</sup> Britannica, *George Washington*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-Washington> (last visited Jan. 5, 2026).

<sup>10</sup> Britannica, *Abraham Lincoln*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Abraham-Lincoln> (last visited Jan. 8, 2026).

<sup>11</sup> This requirement likely does not apply to charter schools. Charter schools are exempt from most statutes, except those specified in s. 1002.33(16), F.S. Section 1003.44, F.S., which contains the requirements of this bill, is not listed as a statute charter schools must follow; this section of law does contain a charter school requirement, but it is limited to adoption of and submission to the DOE an integrated civic education curriculum, which would not appear to include a display of portraits.

The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to select the portraits and make them available to each school district. The bill does not specify the method or format by which the DOE must make these portraits available.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:**

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

This bill could have a significant negative fiscal impact on the DOE or school districts in order to make the portraits available to each specified classroom. The cost to either entity depends on the method the portraits are made available.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends s. 1003.44 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:**

**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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