

1 **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION EMPHASIZING THE**
2 **IMPORTANCE OF CIVICS EDUCATION**

3 2021 GENERAL SESSION

4 STATE OF UTAH

5 **Chief Sponsor: V. Lowry Snow**

6 Senate Sponsor: Ann Millner

8 **LONG TITLE**

9 **General Description:**

10 This bill recognizes the critical role of an engaged and informed citizenry in a healthy
11 democratic government and the importance of civics education in preparing students
12 with the tools necessary for civic engagement.

13 **Highlighted Provisions:**

14 This resolution:

- 15 ▶ recognizes the vital role of civic engagement and the importance of informed and
16 engaged citizens in a healthy democratic government;
- 17 ▶ emphasizes the importance of teaching critical thinking and civic engagement tools
18 to the next generation of citizens;
- 19 ▶ outlines the current civics education requirements for students; and
- 20 ▶ encourages state and education leaders and others interested in civics education to
21 review how civics education is taught in Utah's public education system.

22 **Special Clauses:**

23 None

25 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

26 WHEREAS, the United States of America was established nearly 245 years ago and
27 recognized by Abraham Lincoln in 1863 as a "government of the people, by the people, for the
28 people";

29 WHEREAS, the United States Constitution is the foundational document for the

30 nation's system of government;

31 WHEREAS, the United States Constitution includes a system of checks and balances
32 for and among the three branches of the federal government;

33 WHEREAS, one of the pillars of a functioning and healthy democratic government is
34 informed and engaged citizens;

35 WHEREAS, a robust understanding of the nation's system of government and the role
36 of civic engagement in a functioning and healthy democratic government is particularly
37 important in a deeply partisan and divided political climate;

38 WHEREAS, to preserve our republic, it is vital that civic engagement tools be taught to
39 each succeeding generation of Americans;

40 WHEREAS, the Utah Core State Standards for Social Studies include standards for
41 United States Government and Citizenship, and local education agencies determine how to
42 teach those standards;

43 WHEREAS, Utah public high school students must take a half-credit U.S. Government
44 and Citizenship course as a requirement for graduation;

45 WHEREAS, public school students in Utah are currently required to take a basic civics
46 test prior to graduating, which includes questions used by the United States Citizenship and
47 Immigration Services, or an alternative assessment;

48 WHEREAS, H.B. 334, enacted during the 2020 General Session and defunded during a
49 subsequent Special Session, created a civics engagement pilot program requiring students in
50 the pilot districts to complete a civics engagement project - aligned with the coursework for the
51 U.S. Government and Citizenship course and the state's core standards - as a condition for
52 receiving a high school diploma;

53 WHEREAS, it has been demonstrated through national data that there is a lack of basic
54 knowledge and functional understanding about our system of government, both nationally and
55 in Utah;

56 WHEREAS, this lack of knowledge and understanding is reflected in the current
57 political environment, which is marked by a perpetual and pervasive stream of political rhetoric

58 and content delivered through various media platforms, including social media, some of which
59 is neither credible nor accurate;

60 WHEREAS, there is a need to prepare students with the tools necessary to evaluate and
61 analyze the information being disseminated constantly through media channels, including
62 social media platforms;

63 WHEREAS, Utah's students should be taught skills in constructive civil debate, critical
64 thinking, media literacy, evaluating the credibility of sources, and recognizing the dangers of
65 the dissemination of misinformation and sowing distrust in fundamental civic institutions;

66 WHEREAS, there is a need to prepare students to understand the right of free speech
67 along with the right to peaceably assemble, including for the purpose of lawful protest; and

68 WHEREAS, parents and families can also provide important lessons through word and
69 example about being informed and engaged citizens:

70 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
71 Governor concurring therein, hereby call for a renewed emphasis on civics education and
72 teaching the skills necessary for students to become better educated and prepared to become the
73 next generation of engaged citizens.

74 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and Governor encourage those who
75 are interested and informed in civics education, potentially including legislators, Utah State
76 Board of Education officials, educators, civic-minded leaders, journalists, other state education
77 leaders, parents, and additional parties to work together as part of an informal working group to
78 review how civics education is taught in Utah's public education system, and invite them to
79 share what they have learned - along with any recommendations - with state education leaders,
80 including the Legislature and the Governor.