A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TO FORM A TASK FORCE TO REVIEW CIVICS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AND TO PROPOSE AN IMPROVED CURRICULUM TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENSHIP.

WHEREAS, national polls have recorded historic lows in popular trust for all three branches of the federal government; and

WHEREAS, there is abundant evidence of a low level of understanding of the United States constitution, the United States' system of government and American history in general; and

WHEREAS, the 2010 civics assessment of the national assessment of educational progress of the national center for education states that only twenty-seven percent of fourth
graders, twenty-two percent of eighth graders and twenty-four percent of twelfth graders achieved test results at or above the proficient level in civics; and

WHEREAS, the national assessment of educational progress civics assessment measures the civics knowledge, skills and dispositions that are critical to the responsibilities of citizenship in the constitutional democracy of the United States; and

WHEREAS, the blueprint for the assessment recommends that the assessment should be organized around three main components: civic knowledge, intellectual and participatory skills and civic dispositions; and

WHEREAS, the civic knowledge component draws heavily on the national standards for civics and government and covers a broad range of content that forms the basis for fundamental understanding of civic life, politics and government; the foundations of the American political system; government established by the constitution to embody the purpose, values and principles of American democracy; the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs; and the roles of citizens in American democracy; and

WHEREAS, the intellectual skills component covers those skills of mind and action that allow individuals to apply civic knowledge to good effect by identifying, describing, explaining, analyzing, evaluating, taking and defending
positions; and

WHEREAS, the component of civic dispositions refers to the
traits of private and public character essential to the
preservation and improvement of the constitutional democracy of
the United States that include the following:

A. becoming an independent member of society;
B. assuming the personal, political and economic
responsibilities of a citizen;
C. respecting individual worth and human dignity;
D. participating in civic affairs in an informed,
thoughtful and effective manner; and
E. promoting the healthy functioning of the
constitutional democracy of the United States; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, civics education in schools
across the country has been on the decline; and

WHEREAS, prior to the 1960s, courses encouraging students
to explore their roles as citizens and discuss current issues
were common, while today such classes are rare; and

WHEREAS, civics education instead is typically rolled into
a course about the United States government with little time
devoted to exploring how students can participate in the
democratic process, according to a recent survey from the
national center for learning and civic engagement; and

WHEREAS, public trust in government is at only eighteen
percent, and voter participation has reached its lowest point

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- 3 -
since 1996; and

WHEREAS, without an understanding of the structure of
government and the rights, responsibilities and methods of
public engagement, civic illiteracy and voter apathy will
continue to plague American democracy; and

WHEREAS, educators and schools have a unique opportunity
and responsibility to ensure that young people become engaged
and knowledgeable citizens; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico social studies standards as part of
high school graduation requirements are already guided by New
Mexico statutes and administrative codes that call for
competence in the subject of social studies, but those
standards fall short of the knowledge and confidence required
to fulfill the vital functions of citizenry at this challenging
time for the state and country;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that for the health
of democracy and to maintain a vibrant, active community that
will participate knowledgeably in government for the creation
and maintenance of a society that reflects the values of
equality, liberty and justice for all on which the nation was
founded, the public education department be requested to
convene a civics education task force to determine how to
improve civics curriculum in New Mexico schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the civics education task
force be composed of the following members or the designees of
those members:

A. a representative of the public education
department appointed by the secretary of public education, to
serve as chair of the task force;

B. representatives from or experts on the three
branches of the government of New Mexico: the executive, the
legislative and the judicial;

C. representatives from or experts on the three
branches of the federal government;

D. legal experts focused on civics and
constitutional law;

E. ethics experts;

F. historians specializing in civic history;

G. teachers who have demonstrated innovative
methods of teaching civic engagement, such as mock trials and
mock elections;

H. county clerks and others involved in elections;

and

I. citizen organization leaders dedicated to
raising civic awareness and participation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the civics education task
force seek the input of nationwide experts from institutions
such as the national assessment of educational progress, the
center for civic education, the national conference of state
legislatures, the national center for state courts and other
local, state, county and municipal stakeholders; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the civics education task
force present a report of its activities and a draft of
proposed curriculum for elementary and secondary schools in New
Mexico that will address the need for more comprehensive and
effective civics education to the appropriate interim
legislative committee by November 1, 2019; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be
transmitted to the secretary of public education.

- 6 -