

1 A MEMORIAL

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

6
7 WHEREAS, national polls have recorded historic lows in
8 popular trust for all three branches of the federal
9 government; and

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

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

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

25 WHEREAS, the blueprint for the assessment recommends

1 that the assessment should be organized around three main
2 components: civic knowledge, intellectual and participatory
3 skills and civic dispositions; and

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

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

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

- 22 A. becoming an independent member of society;
- 23 B. assuming the personal, political and economic
24 responsibilities of a citizen;
- 25 C. respecting individual worth and human dignity;

1 D. participating in civic affairs in an informed,
2 thoughtful and effective manner; and

3 E. promoting the healthy functioning of the
4 constitutional democracy of the United States; and

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

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

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

16 WHEREAS, public trust in government is at only eighteen
17 percent, and voter participation has reached its lowest point
18 since 1996; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 B. representatives from or experts on the three
25 branches of the government of New Mexico: the executive, the

1 legislative and the judicial;

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

4 D. legal experts focused on civics and
5 constitutional law;

6 E. ethics experts;

7 F. historians specializing in civic history;

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

11 H. county clerks and others involved in elections;
12 and

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

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

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the civics education task
22 force present a report of its activities and a draft of
23 proposed curriculum for elementary and secondary schools in
24 New Mexico that will address the need for more comprehensive
25 and effective civics education to the appropriate interim

