Introduced by Brasch, 16.
Read first time January 17, 2018
Committee: Education

A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to schools; to amend sections 79-724 and
79-727, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska; to change provisions
relating to the committee on Americanism; to eliminate a penalty; to
provide duties for the State Board of Education and the State
Department of Education; to harmonize provisions; and to repeal the
original sections.

Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,
Section 1. Section 79-724, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

79-724 It is the responsibility of society to ensure that youth are given the opportunity to become competent, responsible, patriotic, and civil citizens to ensure a An informed, loyal, just, and patriotic citizenry is necessary to a strong, stable, just, and prosperous America. Such a citizenry necessitates that every member thereof be fully literate about our acquainted with the nation's history, government, geography, and economic system. The youth in our state should be committed to the ideas and values of our country’s democracy and the constitutional republic established by the people. Schools should help prepare our youth to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good. Civic competence is necessary to sustain and improve our democratic way of life and must be taught in all public, private, denominational, and parochial schools. A central role of schools is to impart civic knowledge and skills that help our youth to see the relevance of a civic dimension for their lives. Students should be made fully aware of the liberties, opportunities, and advantages of which we are possessed and the sacrifices and struggles of those through whose efforts these benefits were gained and that he or she be in full accord with our form of government and fully aware of the liberties, opportunities, and advantages of which we are possessed and the sacrifices and struggles of those through whose efforts these benefits were gained. Since youth is the time most susceptible to the acceptance of principles and doctrines that will influence men and women throughout their lives, it is one of the first duties of our educational system to conduct its activities, choose its textbooks, and arrange its curriculum in such a way that the youth of our state become competent, responsible, patriotic, and civil American citizens the love of liberty, justice, democracy, and America will be instilled in the hearts and minds of the youth of the state.

(1) Every school board of a school district shall, at the beginning
of each school year, appoint from its members a committee of three, to be
known as the committee on Americanism. The committee on Americanism
shall:

(a) Hold no fewer than three public meetings annually, at least one
where public testimony is accepted;

(b) Keep minutes of all meetings showing the time and place of the
meeting, which members were present and absent, and the substance and
details of all matters discussed;

(c) (a) Carefully examine and ensure that the social studies
curriculum used in the district is aligned to the social studies
standards adopted pursuant to section 79-760.01 and teaches and assesses
foundational knowledge in civics, history, economics, financial literacy,
and geography;

(d) Review and approve the social studies curriculum to ensure that
it adequately stresses, inspect, and approve all textbooks used in the
teaching of American history and civil government in the school. Such
textbooks shall adequately stress the services of the men and women who
achieved our national independence, established our constitutional
government, and preserved our union and is shall be so written to include
the incorporation of curriculum standards as set forth in sections 79-719
to 79-723 so contributions by ethnic groups as to develop a pride and
respect for our institutions and not be a mere recital of events and
dates;

(e) Ensure any curriculum that is recommended or approved by the
committee on Americanism is made readily accessible to the public and
contains a reference to this section;

(f) Ensure the district develops and utilizes formative, interim,
and summative assessments, including at a minimum, but not limited to,
the one-hundred-question civics portion of the naturalization examination
administered by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to
determine student mastery of the social studies standards adopted
pursuant to section 79-760.01 administered no later than eighth grade and
eleventh grade, with the individual score from such examination for each
student reported to the parents or guardians of such student and the
aggregate scores for each school district reported annually to the
department;

(g) (b) Assure themselves as to the character of all teachers
employed and their knowledge and acceptance of the American form of
government; and

(h) (c) Take all such other steps as will assure the carrying out of
the provisions of this section and provide a report to the school board
regarding the committee’s findings and recommendations.

(2) All social studies American history courses approved for grade
levels as provided by this section shall include and adequately stress
contributions of all ethnic groups (a) to the development and growth of
America into a great nation, (b) to art, music, education, medicine,
literature, science, politics, and government, and (c) to the war
services in all wars of this nation.

(3) All grades of all public, private, denominational, and parochial
schools, below the sixth grade, shall devote at least one hour per week
to exercises or teaching periods for the following purpose:

(a) The discussion recital of stories having to do with American
history or the deeds and exploits of American heroes;

(b) The historical background, memorization, and singing of
patriotic songs such as and the insistence that every pupil memorize the
Star-Spangled Banner and America the Beautiful; and

(c) The development of reverence for the flag and instruction as to
proper conduct in its presentation.

(4) In at least two of the three grades from the fifth grade to the
eighth grade in all public, private, denominational, and parochial
schools, time at least three periods per week shall be set aside for to
be devoted to the teaching of American history from the social studies
curriculum approved textbooks, which shall be taught in such a way that all students are given the opportunity to become competent, responsible, patriotic, and civil citizens who possess a deep understanding of the United States Constitution and the Constitution of Nebraska and be prepared to preserve, protect, and defend freedom and democracy in our nation and our world as to make the course interesting and attractive and to develop a love of country.

(5) In at least two courses in grades of every high school, time at least three periods per week shall be devoted to the teaching of civics and American history as outlined in the social studies standards adopted pursuant to section 79-760.01, during which courses specific attention shall be given to the following matters:

(a) The Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Constitution of Nebraska, and the structure and function of local government in this state;

(b) The benefits and advantages of our form of government, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in our government, and the dangers and fallacies of forms of government that restrict individual freedoms or possess antidemocratic ideals such as, but not limited to, Nazism and communism; dangers and fallacies of Nazism, Communism, and similar ideologies; and

(c) The duties of citizenship, including active participation in the improvement of a citizen's community, state, country, and world and the value and practice of civil discourse between opposing interests; and

(d) The application of knowledge in civics, history, economics, financial literacy, and geography in order to address meaningful issues within our society.

(6) Appropriate patriotic exercises suitable to the occasion shall be held under the direction of the superintendent in every public, private, denominational, and parochial school on George Washington's birthday, Abraham Lincoln's birthday, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s
birthday, American Indian Day, Flag Day, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and
Thanksgiving Day, or on the day or week Lincoln's birthday, Washington's
birthday, Flag Day, Memorial Day, and Veterans Day, or on the day
preceding or following such holiday, if the school is in session.

(7) Every school board, the State Board of Education, and the
superintendent of each school district in the state shall be held
directly responsible in the order named for carrying out this section,
and neglect thereof by any employee or appointed official shall be
considered a dereliction of duty and may be considered a cause for
dismissal.

Sec. 2. Section 79-727, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is
amended to read:

79-727 The State Board of Education shall adopt and promulgate
rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of sections 79-724
through 79-726. The State Department of Education shall ensure that all
requirements of such sections and such rules and regulations are carried
out by each school district. Any person violating the provisions of
sections 79-724 to 79-726 is guilty of a Class III misdemeanor.

Sec. 3. Original sections 79-724 and 79-727, Reissue Revised
Statutes of Nebraska, are repealed.