

Executive Summary of the Interim activity and work of the Commission on Civic Education 2017

Members

Legislative Members:

The Honorable Richard L. Anderson, Chairman
The Honorable David W. Marsden, Vice Chairman
The Honorable Amanda F. Chase
The Honorable L. Kaye Kory
The Honorable J. Chapman Petersen
The Honorable Brenda L. Pogge
The Honorable Luke E. Torian
The Honorable R. Lee Ware, Jr.

Citizen Members:

The Honorable James H. Dillard II
Mr. Thomas C. Coen
Ms. Betsy Edwards
Mr. Bob Gibson
Ms. Jennifer L. Patja Howell
Mr. G. Michael Wildasin

Ex Officio Member:

Ms. Christonya B. Brown

Staff:

Ryan B. Brimmer, Attorney, Division of Legislative Services
Scott Maddrea, Deputy Clerk, Virginia House of Delegates

OVERVIEW

The Commission on Civic Education is the legislative body charged with (i) educating students on the importance of citizen involvement in a constitutional republic, (ii) promoting the study of state and local government among the Commonwealth's citizenry, (iii) enhancing communication and collaboration among organizations in the Commonwealth that conduct civics education, (iv) developing and coordinating outreach programs in collaboration with schools to educate students on the importance of understanding that (a) a constitutional republic is a form of government dependent on reasoned debate and good faith negotiation; (b) individual involvement is a critical factor in community success; and (c) consideration of and respect for others is essential to deliberating, negotiating, and advocating positions on public concerns, (v) identifying civics education projects in the Commonwealth and providing technical assistance as may be needed to such programs, (vi) building a network of civics education professionals to share information and strengthen partnerships, (vii) developing, in consultation with entities represented on the Commission and others as determined by the Commission, a clearinghouse that shall be accessible on the Department of Education's website to include, among other things, (a) a database of civics education resources, lesson plans, and other programs of best practices in civics education; (b) a bulletin board to promote discussion and exchange of ideas relative to civics education; (c) an events calendar; and (d) links to civics education research, and (viii) making recommendations to the Board of Education regarding revisions to the Standards of Learning for civics and government. See Virginia Code §§ 30-348 and 30-351.

The Commission met once during the 2017 interim and held its annual Civics Summit in November.

MEETINGS

August 2017 meeting

The Virginia Commission on Civic Education held its first meeting of the 2017 interim on Thursday, August 17, 2017 in House Room 1 at the Capitol in Richmond. A quorum was present and consisted of legislative members Delegate Rich Anderson (chairman), Senator Dave Marsden (vice-chairman), Senator Amanda Chase, and Delegate Brenda Pogge and nonlegislative citizen members Jim Dillard, Betsy Edwards, Bob Gibson, Jennifer Patja Howell, and Mike Wildasin. The Commission took up the following agenda items:

Planning for Annual Civics Summit:

Location: Based on logistical issues created by the General Assembly's move to the Pocahontas Building (parking, room capacity, availability of catering), the Commission, after some discussion of off campus locations including Montpelier, the Virginia Historical Society, and JMU, ultimately reached consensus that the offices of the Virginia Press Association in the Short Pump area of Henrico County would be the preferable location based on ample meeting space and parking, catering capabilities, and live streaming capabilities.

Agenda: Will include the annual election analysis by Quentin Kidd (CNU) and Bob Holsworth (DecideSmart) and a presentation from VPAP in the morning, vendor booths set up during lunchtime, and afternoon presentations by Meg Heubeck (YLI Director of Instruction at the University of Virginia Center for Politics) on training teachers to promote civic engagement, Jim Dillard and Alice Riley on the difference between community service and service learning, the Civics Renewal Network, and the Governor of Virginia (pending availability).

Funding: Commission Clerk Scott Maddrea will inquire as to the funds available in the Commission coffers to cover the costs of the Summit.

Promotion: Senator Chase offered to promote the Summit on her radio show on 97.7.

Report by Mr. Dillard on Civic Initiatives:

Civic Gap Policy Analysis: A national work group coordinated by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) has conducted an analysis of where each state stands in terms of the promotion of civic learning, and Christonya Brown will be presenting the results of that study to the Board of Education in September of November.

Promotion of College, Career, and Civic Readiness to the Board of Education: The Board of Education has agreed to include this third "C" (civic readiness) as one of its goals, which represents a big win for civic education advocates in the Commonwealth.

Inclusion of Civics in the SOAs and Profile of a Graduate: With the inclusion of civic readiness in the SOAs and new high school graduation requirements, it is important to start to determine how that concept gets implemented, e.g. defining high quality service learning.

Ways to Connect Directly with Students: This should be a continued focus of the Commission. Senator Chase and Ms. Edwards mentioned the possibility of expanding the House and Senate page programs.

Commission Collaboration with the Council of State Governments (CSG) and ECS: CSG and ECS are collaborating to develop a framework and policy for the statewide promotion of civic education. Once their work is complete in September, Mr. Dillard and a smaller work group of the Commission will meet to discuss the results.

Future of the Virginia Commission on Civic Education: There is a growing concern that House and Senate leadership do not realize all of the work that the Commission does to promote civic education and are considering folding the Commission into other existing education-related commissions or committees. Members expressed willingness to (i) meet with Delegate Cox, Delegate Landes, Senator Newman and others and (ii) invite those individuals to the Civics Summit to get a firsthand look at the Commission's flagship event. Ms. Edwards also expressed a desire to develop a set of editorials to explain and promote the work of this Commission.

Proposal by Senator Marsden for a Capitol Commission Fundraiser:

Senator Marsden attended a parent-child sleepover fundraising event at the National Archives with his grandson recently and expressed interest in replicating this event at the Capitol (and possibly the Library of Virginia) to raise money for the Capitol Square Preservation Council. He and Mr.

Dillard plan to speak with Senate Clerk Susan Clarke Schaar about the idea later in the day and will report back to the Commission on that conversation.

Annual Civic Summit

The Virginia Commission on Civic Education sponsored its annual Civics Summit on Thursday, November 16, 2017 at the Virginia Press Association in western Henrico county. Elementary, middle, and high school government teachers from school across the Commonwealth as well as several members of the Commission and other interested individuals attended the Summit. The Summit featured the following presentations:

- Dr. Robert Holsworth, Managing Principal of DecideSmart, and Dr. Quentin Kidd, Director of Christopher Newport University's Wason Center for Public Policy, provided an analysis of the recent state elections.
- Dr. Stephen Farnsworth, Director of University of Mary Washington's Center for Leadership and Media Studies, presented on the changing landscape of Virginia politics.
- A break for lunch also provided an opportunity for Summit participants to engage with various exhibitors at booths set up at the Virginia Press Association.
- After lunch, Meg Heubeck, Director of Instruction at the UVA Center for Politics, presented strategies for practical civic engagement for teachers.
- David Poole, Director of the Virginia Public Access Project (VPAP) presented on using data to analyze the political landscape.
- First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe rounded out the afternoon by addressing the audience on her views of the importance of civic education to the Commonwealth.