

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 47

(Senator Britt)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

Task Force to Convene a Summit on Civic Literacy in Maryland

This bill establishes a Task Force to Convene a Summit on Civic Literacy in Maryland staffed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). The task force must convene a civic literacy summit to develop and recommend a plan for enhancing civic engagement and literacy in the State. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) must be invited to facilitate the summit. A final report is due by December 31, 2006.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2006 and sunsets December 31, 2006.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures could increase by up to \$100,000 in FY 2007 to contract with CIRCLE for the facilitation of a civic literacy summit and the writing of a summit report. Depending on the extent of CIRCLE's involvement, the cost could be lower or could be eliminated entirely. Convening the task force could improve the State's chances of obtaining a \$20,000 private grant to foster best practices in civic literacy.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Background: The first Congressional Conference on Civic Education, held in September 2003, represented the start of a five-year national initiative on civic literacy. Since then, two more national conferences have been held, one in December 2004 and the other in September 2005. The conferences were sponsored by the Alliance for Representative Democracy, a collaboration between the National Conference for State Legislatures, the Center on Congress at Indiana University, and the Center for Civic Education.

Prompted by the national initiative, the Maryland Coalition for Civic Education was formed in January 2004 and includes more than 100 members. The coalition has established a State plan for civic literacy that includes:

- generating public awareness and support for the civic mission of schools;
- developing a mechanism to coordinate and enhance civic education in Maryland;
- identifying best practices for civic education and engagement; and
- sharing civic education information at professional development workshops.

CIRCLE is based in the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy. It promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. CIRCLE was founded with a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts and is now also funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

State Revenues: One of the efforts undertaken by the Maryland Coalition for Civic Education was the submission of a \$20,000 private grant request that would have provided funding to promote best practices in civic literacy. The proposal was not funded. The grant reviewers suggested convening a civic literacy task force before resubmitting the proposal. If the proposed task force leads to a successful grant application, special fund revenues could increase by an estimated \$20,000 in fiscal 2007 or 2008.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures could increase to the extent that CIRCLE is involved in planning and coordinating a civic literacy summit and writing the subsequent report. Full involvement by CIRCLE for a two-day summit would require a contract of up to \$100,000 in fiscal 2007. With staff from MSDE and MHEC assigned to

the task force, it is unlikely that this level of involvement from CIRCLE would be necessary. CIRCLE advises that if it is only asked to participate in the task force, donate a site for the summit, and introduce the topic of civic literacy at the summit, it could do so with existing personnel and resources.

MSDE and MHEC could staff the task force with existing personnel and resources.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: SJ 9/HJ 10 of 2005 would have urged the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House to convene a summit on civic literacy. HB 1072 of 2005 would have established a task force to examine existing civic education programs. None of the measures were successful.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Higher Education Commission, Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Department of Legislative Services

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m/rhh

Analysis by: Mark W. Collins

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510