



Conservative Leaders for Education

Statement by Conservative Leaders for Education in support of HB 2573

Conservative Leaders for Education (CL4E) is a network of leading state policy makers and legislative education chairs focused on ensuring conservative principles gain traction in state policy. CL4E is chaired by former Secretary of Education William J. Bennett, and is pleased to have Kansas House Education Committee Chair Huebert as one of our members.

CL4E is founded and organized around four key principals, one of which is quality content. In the area of quality content, one of the most important needs is to bring a renewed focus and improvement to civics education across the country. Interestingly, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and the Hoover Institution recently sponsored the *Education 20/20 Speaker's Series* with submissions from nineteen thought leaders to examine where conservatives should focus their attention in the area of education policy in the coming years. Civics education was the topic that attracted the most universal attention across all of the submissions.

As CL4E Chair Dr. Bennett argued in his concluding submission for this series, conservatives must renew their efforts -- across the board -- in the area of curriculum and content so those efforts match the efforts that have been made in advancing choice and accountability. Choice and accountability will certainly always remain critical in sound education policy, but it is also important for educational leaders at the state level to address the question of choice and accountability *about what?*

While certainly multi-faceted, a critical part of that answer must be the essential and basic education of civics history and knowledge. Unfortunately, the evidence that we as a nation are too often failing our children in this regard is all too prevalent.

CL4E commends Chair Huebert for the introduction of HB 2573, which will bring much needed attention and focus to this critical issue in Kansas. It is often said that in any organization or system what gets measured gets done. While we do not suggest the education of our nation's students to become ready to be full and active citizens can be completely reduced to any single set of measures, what we *do* measure *does* matter. Certainly, basic knowledge of the history and building blocks of our government and nation must deserve a place amongst those key areas of content, skills and knowledge that should be measured along every student's road to graduation.

While Kansas would become a leader amongst states with the adoption of HB 2573, other states have taken this similar approach. Specifically, Minnesota, Missouri, Tennessee, Utah, North Dakota, Arizona and Wisconsin have moved to adopt similar policies as proposed in HB 2573. These states are showing that a requirement like that found in HB 2573 is not only workable, but could help bring a renewed focus on basic civics literacy at the high school level.

It is worth noting that the true goal and hope of a measure like HB 2573 is not simply that students fill in the right number of correct responses on a civics exam. It is much higher. The real desired outcome is that teachers and students truly engage in our nation's extraordinary and unprecedented experiment in self-governance. That the hard issues inherent in self-governance are explored, discussed, and debated. However, for those discussions to even occur at a meaningful level, all involved must first possess a basic foundation of civic knowledge. That should be a goal all can support.

CL4E commends Chair Huebert and the Kansas Legislature for its consideration of HB 2573 and write to encourage all continued efforts to advance quality civics education and civics content in our nation's schools.