

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR **SENATE, Nos. 854 and 237**

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 21, 2021

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill Nos. 854 and 237 SCS.

This bill amends current law that requires the State Department of Education to prepare curriculum guidelines for the teaching of civics for use by local school boards in implementing the two-year high school course of study in the history of the United States required under N.J.S.18A:35-1 and N.J.S.18A:35-2. The substitute now directs the New Jersey Center for Civic Education at Rutgers, The State University to prepare curriculum guidelines and provide professional development for high school social studies teachers in fulfilling the requirement of integrating civics, economics, and the history of New Jersey into the United States history course.

The bill requires the provision of civics instruction to middle school pupils in public schools. Current law requires a course of study in civics, geography, and the history of New Jersey to be provided to public school elementary students, but no similar requirement exists for middle school pupils. Under the substitute, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, each board of education is required to provide a course of study about the values and principles underlying the American system of constitutional democracy, the function and limitations of government, and the role of a citizen in a democratic society. The course is to be taken by all pupils in an appropriate middle school grade. The course of study must include a minimum of two quarters of instruction, or the equivalent.

The bill also directs that the New Jersey Center for Civic Education at Rutgers, the State University will provide a clearinghouse of materials, an online resource center, technical assistance, professional development and any other activities to encourage the integration of civics, economics, and New Jersey history in the required high school course in the history of the United States and to enhance the teaching of civics in middle school required pursuant to the substitute.

The bill is named in honor of Mrs. Laura Wooten, a great New Jerseyan who contributed a lifetime of civic service. Mrs. Wooten was born on Dec. 19, 1920, in Goldsboro, North Carolina and was

the longest serving poll volunteer in the nation. Mrs. Wooten graduated from Princeton High School in 1939, was an elder of the First Baptist Church of Princeton, and joined Princeton University as a part time staff member after retiring from Princeton Medical Center at the age of 72. Mrs. Wooten passed away on March 24, 2019 at the age of 98.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) estimates that there will be an indeterminate increase in annual State expenditures to provide funds to the New Jersey Center for Civic Education at Rutgers University to develop curriculum guidelines (currently prepared by the Department of Education) and newly provide professional development to high school social studies teachers to integrate civics, economics, and the history of New Jersey into the United States history course required under current law.

While the bill requires the center to provide a clearinghouse of materials, an online resource center, technical assistance, and professional development, the center currently provides many of the resources and services listed in the bill. Any increased costs incurred by the center will depend upon the extent to which its current resources and services address the integration of civics, economics, and New Jersey history into the current United States high school history course and the middle school civics course required under the bill.

School districts will incur increased annual costs to the extent that additional faculty are needed to meet the educational requirements of the bill, or if existing faculty members require new materials or engage in training offered by the center or another provider. The OLS cannot project what future resources school districts will require to meet the in-class instructional provisions of this bill and therefore cannot estimate the annual local cost impact.