



Contact: Abby T. Pfeiffer, 312-445-5066
apfeiffer@mccormickfoundation.org

News Release

ILLINOIS SENATE PASSES LANDMARK CIVICS LEGISLATION 46-7-2

Legislation Requires a Civics Class to Graduate High School

CHICAGO, May 30, 2015 — Today, the Illinois Senate voted in favor of HB 4025 – legislation requiring a civics class in order to graduate from high school – passing **46-7-2** with strong bi-partisan support. The bill previously passed in the House, and now goes to Governor Rauner for signature.

The legislation is based on the recommendations of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education established by the General Assembly that held hearings throughout the state in 2014. Illinois is one of only ten states that does not have a civic education graduation requirement, and as a result, many students leave high school without the knowledge and skills necessary for informed and effective engagement in our democracy. Representative Deb Conroy (D-Villa Park) and Senator Tom Cullerton (D-Villa Park) championed the legislation in their respective chambers.

“Good government is a result of public officials and residents working together to make informed decisions,” said Sen. Cullerton. “We need to ensure our young people know how government works to make sure government is working for them.”

As Rep. Conroy stated in sponsoring the legislation, “Many students graduate without even basic knowledge of current events and how to become active members of their communities.” The proposed legislation will help fill this civic education gap, and bring civics back to all our schools.

Learning about civics is more than reading about it in a textbook, taking a test or voting, it's about understanding the importance of our role as citizens in a democracy,” said Dr. Shawn Healy, Chair of the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition. “Studies show that young people with rich school-based civic learning experiences develop into informed adults who are deeply engaged in their communities.”

To help with implementation of the legislation, slated to begin during the 2016-17 school year, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, the Chicago Community Trust, and other leading business and civic organizations from around the state, have pledged at least \$1 million annually for three years to address professional development needs for teacher training throughout Illinois.

“Educating the next generation of citizens was historically a central mission of our schools,” said David Hiller President and CEO of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation. “We need to make sure it is again. I salute Senator Cullerton, Rep. Conroy, and the members of the General Assembly for passing transformational legislation to bring civics back to Illinois schools. Educated, engaged young people are our future.”

About the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition

The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition (ICMC) is a broad non-partisan consortium including educators, administrators, students, universities, funders, elected officials, policymakers and representatives from the private and non-profit sectors.

Formed in 2004 by the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, the ICMC is part of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, a national initiative to restore a core purpose of education to prepare America’s youngest citizens to be informed and active participants in our democracy. The Robert R. McCormick Foundation has convened the ICMC since 2010. For more information visit www.McCormickFoundation.org/DemocracySchools.