



Contact: Abby T. Pfeiffer, 312-445-5066  
[apfeiffer@mccormickfoundation.org](mailto:apfeiffer@mccormickfoundation.org)

## News Release

### **GOVERNOR CLEARS PATH FOR REQUIRED CIVICS COURSE** *Bill Signing Strengthens Civics Curriculum in State High Schools in 2016*

**CHICAGO, August 26, 2015**—Governor Bruce Rauner recently signed HB 4025—a bill providing that, of the two years of social studies currently required of high school students prior to graduation, at least one semester include a civics course beginning July 1, 2016.

Now that Governor Rauner has signed HB 4025, the final step to fully enhancing civics curriculum throughout the state is the Senate passage of HB 800, which passed through the House earlier this month (87-6-0) with strong bi-partisan support. HB 800 clarifies the implementation date in HB 4025 as July 1, 2016, and applies to incoming freshmen for the 2016-2017 school year.

“This is truly a great time for civics and civic education in the state of Illinois,” says Representative Deborah Conroy (D-Villa Park), a longtime proponent of higher standards for civics curriculum, and legislation co-sponsor. “While this has been a long road, the objective has always been clear, we want to create a better environment to empower tomorrow’s voters and residents. I thank Governor Rauner and the Illinois General Assembly for ensuring that is accomplished.”

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. Before this legislation, Illinois was one of only eleven states that did 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.

“This has been a long time in the making but we got it done,” adds Sen. Cullerton, one of the co-sponsors of the civics legislation. “The affirmative vote is a testament to the commitment of both chambers to create a better environment for the citizens of tomorrow by enhancing civics education today.”

To help with implementation of the legislation, 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.

“This was a big step; 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,” says 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.”

#### **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](http://www.McCormickFoundation.org/DemocracySchools).