

1 State of Arkansas
2 91st General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2017
4

A Bill

SENATE BILL 519

5 By: Senator D. Wallace
6 By: Representative G. Hodges
7

For An Act To Be Entitled

9 AN ACT TO REFINE THE TEACHING OF HISTORY IN THE
10 CLASSROOM; TO SPECIFY DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL
11 MATERIALS AND UNITS REGARDING DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING
12 JR.; TO ELIMINATE THE DUAL STATUS OF THE JOINT
13 HOLIDAY COMMEMORATING DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. AND
14 ROBERT E. LEE; TO SPECIFY THE TEACHING OF CONTENT
15 RELATED TO DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. IN CONJUNCTION
16 WITH THE CORRESPONDING HOLIDAY; AND FOR OTHER
17 PURPOSES.
18

Subtitle

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20
21 TO AMEND TITLE 6 OF THE ARKANSAS CODE
22 CONCERNING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR
23 HISTORY IN THE CLASSROOM; AND TO EFFECT A
24 SEPARATE HOLIDAY FOR DR. MARTIN LUTHER
25 KING JR.
26

27
28 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
29

30 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-16-121 is amended to read as follows:
31 6-16-121. African-American history – Teaching materials.

32 (a) (1) The Commissioner of Education shall develop the materials or
33 units for the teaching of historical contributions made by African-Americans
34 in the United States and in other countries prior to the establishment of the
35 United States for inclusion in the appropriate curricula of all kindergarten
36 through grade twelve (K-12) of all public schools in the State of Arkansas.



1 ~~beginning with the 1994-1995 school year.~~

2 (2) Emphasis shall be placed on the historic work of American
3 civil rights leaders, including without limitation Dr. Martin Luther King
4 Jr., and his pursuit of justice in civil society.

5 (3) The requirement under this subsection shall be taught as
6 appropriate in the classroom and shall specifically be taught in conjunction
7 with corresponding state and federal holidays.

8 (b) The commissioner shall ensure that these materials or units are
9 reproduced and sent to all school districts in the state.

10
11 SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 6-16-107(a), concerning education and
12 patriotic observances, is amended to read as follows:

13 (a) February 22, as the birthday of George Washington, ~~and January 19,~~
14 ~~as the birthday of Robert E. Lee,~~ and such other days as may be designated by
15 the State Board of Education for patriotic observance shall be observed with
16 appropriate exercises.

17
18 SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 6-16-124 is amended to read as follows:
19 6-16-124. Arkansas history – Required social studies course.

20 ~~(a)(1) Beginning with the 1997-1998 school year:~~

21 ~~(1)~~ A unit of Arkansas history shall be taught as a social
22 studies subject at each elementary grade level in every public elementary
23 school in this state, with greater emphasis at the fourth and fifth grade
24 levels; and

25 (2) At least one (1) full semester of Arkansas history shall be
26 taught to all students at the seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, or
27 twelfth grade level in every public secondary school in this state.

28 (b)(1) Course guidelines shall ensure that the courses represent the
29 most accurate and historically sound account of the prehistory, history, and
30 culture of Arkansas, including the significant contributions and achievements
31 of all segments of the population.

32 (2) Any revisions in the Arkansas history course content
33 guidelines shall be reported to the public schools and the House Committee on
34 Education and the Senate Committee on Education no later than July 1 of the
35 year the course guidelines are to be implemented.

36 (3)(A) The Department of Education shall, in advance of the

1 2018-2019 school year, develop materials or units relating to Arkansas and
2 the American Civil War.

3 (B) The emphasis of the curriculum under this subdivision
4 (b)(3) shall be placed upon civilian and military leadership during the
5 period and how the lessons of that era can inform contemporary society.

6 (C) The course content under this subdivision (b)(3) is
7 not exempt from the reporting requirements under subdivision (b)(2) of this
8 section.

9
10 SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 1-5-101(a)(2), concerning official state
11 holidays, is amended to read as follows:

12 (2) ~~Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Birthday and Robert E. Lee’s~~
13 ~~Birthday~~ – the third Monday in January;

14
15 SECTION 5. Arkansas Code § 1-5-106, concerning state memorial days to
16 be commemorated by gubernatorial proclamation, is amended to add an
17 additional subdivision to read as follows:

18 (12) Robert E. Lee Day – Second Saturday in October.

19
20 SECTION 6. DO NOT CODIFY. Legislative findings – Intent.

21 (a) The General Assembly finds that:

22 (1) The State of Arkansas has a very proud and distinguished
23 culture and heritage;

24 (2) Robust recognition of history in the classroom is a priority;
25 and

26 (3) The state should maintain and celebrate its culture and
27 heritage, including our state and national military leaders who are connected
28 to Arkansas or have impacted the course of our state’s history.

29 (b) It is the intent of the General Assembly by the enactment of this
30 act to maintain an awareness of and celebrate the unique cultural heritage of
31 Arkansas by educating Arkansas youth regarding:

32 (1) Historical events of state and national significance;

33 (2) The contributions made to the history of this state by
34 military and civilian leaders; and

35 (3) The reasons for honoring such historical events and figures
36 through the observance of days designated for their commemoration.