**South Carolina General Assembly**

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**H. 3547**

**STATUS INFORMATION**

General Bill

Sponsors: Reps. Cobb-Hunter, Garvin and Grant

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Introduced in the House on January 14, 2025

Currently residing in the House Committee on **Education and Public Works**

Summary: Civics course required for middle schools

**HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS**

 Date Body Action Description with journal page number

 12/5/2024 House Prefiled

 12/5/2024 House Referred to Committee on **Education and Public Works**

 1/14/2025 House Introduced and read first time (House Journal‑page 240)

 1/14/2025 House Referred to Committee on **Education and Public Works** (House Journal‑page 240)

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**VERSIONS OF THIS BILL**

[12/05/2024](https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess126_2025-2026/prever/3547_20241205.docx)

A bill

TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 59‑29‑235 SO AS TO PROVIDE ALL MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS MUST COMPLETE ONE UNIT OF CIVICS EDUCATION THAT MUST INCLUDE CERTAIN INSTRUCTIONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL COMPONENTS AS PROVIDED IN THIS SECTION, AND TO ESTABLISH THE PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL CIVICS CHALLENGE TO ENABLE ALL MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS TO SHOWCASE THEIR STUDENT‑LED CIVICS PROJECTS THAT PROMOTE AND DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, CITIZENSHIP, AND COMMUNITY SERVICE, TO REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO ADOPT RELATED CURRICULUM BEFORE THE 2027‑2028 SCHOOL YEAR, AND TO MAKE THESE PROVISIONS APPLICABLE TO STUDENTS WHO BEGIN MIDDLE SCHOOL IN THE 2027‑2028 SCHOOL YEAR.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Article 1, Chapter 29, Title 59 of the S.C. Code is amended by adding:

 Section 59‑29‑235. (A) Beginning with the 2027-2028 School Year, all:

 (1) middle school students must complete one unit of civics education that must include instructional and experiential components as provided in this section; and

 (2) each middle school must offer such civics education coursework for each grade level.

 (B) As used in this section, “civics education” means instruction in the knowledge, skills, and virtues needed for competent citizenship in a democracy.

 (C) The instructional component of civics education required in subsection (A) must:

 (1) impart the knowledge needed for citizens’ informed participation in their democracy, including:

 (a) basic knowledge of history, economics, geography, and government or political science;

 (b) core concepts of democracy, the Constitution and institutions of democracy, and public issues past and present pertaining to the practice of democracy;

 (2) develop the intellectual and practical skills that enable citizens to use knowledge effectively as they act individually and collectively in the public life of their democracy, including:

 (a) the capacities of citizens to read, write, and speak effectively, to think critically, and to make and defend sound judgments about public issues; and

 (b) skills of thinking and participating, in combination with civic knowledge, which enable citizens with common interests to influence the decisions of their representatives in government;

 (3) encourage the virtues that dispose citizens positively to the ideals and principles of their democracy, such as civility, honesty, charity, compassion, courage, loyalty, patriotism, and self‑restraint. These character traits prompt citizens to contribute to the well‑being of their community and democracy.

 (D) The curriculum for the instructional component required in subsection (C) must include meaningful use of the American Democracy Game offered by the Center for Legislative Strengthening of National Conference of State Legislators or another similar online, interactive game that enables the user to develop an understanding of the work of a lawmaker including dealing with public policy issues, discovering the interests of each side of a public policy issue, and learning how negotiation and compromise can lead to a positive outcome. The department shall develop guidelines on the effective use of this interactive, online resource so that it will enhance the learning experience of the student and achieve the objectives of this subsection.

 (E)(1) The experiential component of civics education required in subsection (A) must require each public middle school to provide no less than one student‑led, nonpartisan civics project for each student, and such projects may be individual, small group or class wide, and designed to promote a student’s ability to:

 (a) analyze complex issues;

 (b) consider differing points of view;

 (c) reason, make logical arguments and support claims using valid evidence;

 (d) engage in civil discourse with those who hold opposing positions; and

 (e) demonstrate an understanding of the connections between federal, state, and local policies, and include issues that may impact the student’s school or community.

 (2) Any student choosing not to participate in a particular group or class wide project must be offered the opportunity to develop an individual civics project, with approval by the teacher or principal.

 (F) Subject to appropriations, the Palmetto Civics Challenge is established in the State Department of Education. The department shall establish guidelines for implementation. The challenge must be available to all middle school students to showcase their student‑led civics projects that promote and demonstrate an understanding of civic engagement, citizenship, and community service. There must be a category for competition within each grade level in middle school but competition among grades is not allowed. The department may partner with a college, university, museum, library, or other similar nonprofit entity for the establishment of the challenge and may seek private funding for it.

 (G) The State Board of Education shall adopt a statewide curriculum for the civics coursework requirement of this section before the 2027‑2028 School Year.

 (H) The provisions of this section are applicable to students who begin middle school in the 2027‑2028 School Year.

SECTION 2. This act takes effect on July 1, 2026.

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