

JAN 23 2025

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE ALOHA SPIRIT, CIVICS, AND DEMOCRACY.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that American democracy  
2 and its political and social institutions have long served as  
3 models for democratic governance in the free world. In 2024,  
4 United States voters favored decisive autocratic leadership  
5 slightly more than democratic governance by consensus, among  
6 other things. On the federal level and in thirty-seven states,  
7 full partisan control of legislative chambers and governorships  
8 enable passage of legislation without the need for compromise or  
9 consensus.

10           The legislature further finds that Hawaii residents  
11 overwhelming support the "Aloha Spirit" and its values, as  
12 recognized under state law. Hawaii's preference for values-  
13 based governance and civic life offers a balanced approach to  
14 complement some national leaders' "America First" philosophy.  
15 The legislature believes that Hawaii has an opportunity to  
16 contribute to humankind by sharing the "Aloha Spirit" with



1 America and the world, as contemplated when the law was adopted  
2 in 1986.

3 The legislature also finds that political polarization in  
4 America has intensified, deepening the discord between  
5 progressive and conservative social norms and widening the gap  
6 of mutual understanding. The legislature believes that Hawaii  
7 can offer a divided America a way to understand mutuality  
8 through examples of living the Aloha Spirit: with personal  
9 responsibility, mutual caring, and respect for our common  
10 existence. As the State recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic,  
11 stories from Hawaii will be told of reorganizing rule-based  
12 institutions to align with the caring values of Aloha.

13 While economic and political systems may take decades to  
14 truly value human capital and worth, many Hawaii residents and  
15 Native Hawaiians are already living individual and collective  
16 lives with the Aloha Spirit. The legislature believes the State  
17 should assist this values movement by providing educational  
18 resources to foster a civic ethos and social conditions to  
19 sustain the Aloha Spirit. The State should also build community  
20 consensus for a preferred Hawaii future in the global economy,



1 such as becoming a values-based economic community and global  
2 enterprise.

3 The legislature also finds that the rule of law can limit  
4 harmful behavior, punish misdeeds, and deter unethical conduct,  
5 but that laws alone cannot sustain democracy nor lead to  
6 collaboration or creative problem-solving. Instead, the civic  
7 values and norms of a community guide its leaders and form the  
8 foundation of a functioning democracy. The legislature believes  
9 that a civics program based on the values of Aloha is necessary  
10 to sustain a healthy democracy in Hawaii, especially in these  
11 times of polarization and strife.

12 The legislature believes that Aloha has, and continues to  
13 be, the guiding principle in Hawaiian culture. Aloha connects  
14 the people who live in the Hawaiian islands, and may serve as an  
15 aspiration for people new to the State. Aloha is central to  
16 civic life in Hawaii, where mutual caring is a tradition, and  
17 what sustains our democracy. The legislature believes that  
18 democracy is a collective expression of Aloha and the way the  
19 people of Hawaii share lives together.

20 To bring the Aloha Spirit into everyday life in the State,  
21 the legislature believes that an independent, community-based



1 civics collaborative should facilitate a state civics program  
2 and coordinate its educational, engagement, and other  
3 components. The collaborative should be composed of a cross  
4 sector of civic organizations and leaders, including the PACE  
5 (promote and advance civic education) Commission. Support for  
6 the collaborative can come from legislative appropriations,  
7 internal budgets of participating groups and agencies, and from  
8 private sector grants.

9 The legislature believes that a state civics program should  
10 provide Hawaii residents with civic competencies useful in  
11 employment, volunteer, and civic programs. People who learn and  
12 practice advanced civics skills should have, among participating  
13 organizations, preferred status in hiring public-facing  
14 employees, community grantmaking programs, and procurement of  
15 civic services. The civics program should also include  
16 workshops on government processes, monitoring of boards and  
17 commissions by volunteers, media literacy and storytelling  
18 programs, training for civic leadership, community improvement  
19 projects, and neighborhood support for vulnerable persons.

20 The legislature further finds that two full-time department  
21 of education civic education specialists and additional funds



1 for the legislature's public access room would enable enhanced  
2 coordination of civics programs, including student government  
3 leadership classes; student and youth programs, conferences, and  
4 activities; democracy schools and kindness curricula; school  
5 newspapers and student journalists; and volunteers for field  
6 trips and community projects. The legislature also believes  
7 that nonprofit organizations should, where practicable, provide  
8 civics education funded by legislative and philanthropic grants.

9 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 10 (1) Establish the Hawaii civics collaborative,  
11 administratively attached to the department of  
12 accounting and general services, supported by  
13 government and private grants and personnel from  
14 participating agencies and organizations, chaired by a  
15 joint appointee of the presiding officers of the  
16 legislature, and composed of a cross sector of civic  
17 organizations and leaders, including the PACE  
18 Commission and members selected by leaders of state  
19 government, the university of Hawaii, department of  
20 education, and office of Hawaiian affairs;



- 1           (2) Authorize the Hawaii civics collaborative to  
2           coordinate a state civics program that includes  
3           educational courses, workshops, and other learning  
4           opportunities to educate residents on the purpose,  
5           history, processes, and public engagement practices of  
6           democracy, and workshops on government processes,  
7           monitoring of boards and commissions by volunteers,  
8           media literacy and storytelling programs, training for  
9           civic leadership, community improvement projects, and  
10          neighborhood support for vulnerable persons;
- 11          (3) Certify the completion of civics courses that may be  
12          used for employment, volunteer, and civic project  
13          purposes and provide special civics designations for  
14          graduates of advanced civics programs who receive from  
15          participating organizations preference in hiring,  
16          grant applications, and procurement of services;
- 17          (4) Appropriate funds to establish two full-time  
18          equivalent (2.0 FTE) civic education specialists to  
19          support the civic education program in the department  
20          of education and to enable enhanced civics programming  
21          by the legislature's public access room;



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1           (5) Authorize the civics collaborative to coordinate  
2           student and youth civic programs, including student  
3           government leadership classes; student and youth  
4           programs, conferences, and activities; democracy  
5           schools and kindness curricula; school newspapers and  
6           student journalists; and volunteers for field trips  
7           and community projects; and

8           (6) Coordinate with nonprofit organizations that provide  
9           civics education to participate in the state civics  
10          program, cross-sector civic collaboratives, joint  
11          internship fellowship and leader training programs,  
12          and the university of Hawaii Matsunaga institute of  
13          peace and the United Nations global citizen education  
14          program.

15          SECTION 2. Chapter 27, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended  
16          by adding two new sections to part I to be appropriately  
17          designated and to read as follows:

18          "§27-       Hawaii civics collaborative. (a) There is  
19          established the Hawaii civics collaborative, which shall be  
20          organized as a private nonprofit organization and registered in  
21          the State. The Hawaii civics collaborative shall be attached to



1 the department of accounting and general services for  
2 administrative purposes only.

3 (b) The collaborative shall be composed of the following  
4 members:

5 (1) Members of the PACE Commission;

6 (2) One appointee by each of the following:

7 (A) Governor;

8 (B) Lieutenant governor;

9 (C) Chief justice;

10 (D) President of the senate;

11 (E) Speaker of the house of representatives;

12 (F) Superintendent of education;

13 (G) President of the university of Hawaii; and

14 (H) Chairperson of the office of Hawaiian Affairs  
15 board of trustees;

16 (3) Other members invited by the Hawaii civics  
17 collaborative; and

18 (4) The chairperson of the collaborative shall be  
19 appointed jointly by the president of the senate and  
20 speaker of the house of representatives.



1        (c) The duties of the Hawaii civics collaborative shall  
2 include but not be limited to the following:

3        (1) Coordinate the state civics program to include  
4 educational courses, workshops, and other learning  
5 opportunities to educate residents on the purpose,  
6 history, processes, and public engagement practices of  
7 democracy;

8        (2) Conduct workshops on government processes, monitoring  
9 of boards and commissions by volunteers, media  
10 literacy and storytelling programs, training for civic  
11 leadership, community improvement projects, and  
12 neighborhood support for vulnerable persons;

13        (3) Certify the completion of civics courses that may be  
14 used for employment, volunteer, and civic project  
15 purposes, including special civics designations for  
16 advanced civics programs that receive preference in  
17 hiring, grant applications, and procurement of  
18 services from participating organizations;

19        (4) Coordinate participation in the civics program of  
20 diverse organizations, including the department of  
21 education, public access room, university of Hawaii



1 Matsunaga institute for peace; leadership programs  
2 such as fellowships and internships; other grantmaking  
3 organizations, nonprofit groups, and socially  
4 responsible corporations; United Nations global  
5 citizen education program; and other interested  
6 organizations; and

7 (5) Coordinate student and youth civic programs, including  
8 student government leadership classes; student and  
9 youth programs, conferences, and activities; democracy  
10 schools and kindness curricula; school newspapers and  
11 student journalists; and volunteers for field trips  
12 and community projects.

13 §27- State civics program. (a) There is established a  
14 state civics program that shall include educational courses,  
15 workshops, and other learning opportunities. The program shall  
16 have course objectives, including:

- 17 (1) Understanding the purpose of democracy;  
18 (2) Studying the history of democracy and its context;  
19 (3) Learning the processes in democratic decision-making;  
20 (4) Enhancing media literacy; and



1       (5) Facilitating engagement in civic and policy-making  
2           activities.

3 Participants may also be invited to live and practice the "Aloha  
4 Spirit" in their daily lives, organizations, civic projects, and  
5 by sharing their experience of "Aloha".

6       (b) The state civics program shall include the following  
7 initiatives:

8       (1) Educational courses, workshops, and other learning  
9           opportunities to educate residents on the purpose,  
10          history, processes, and public engagement practices of  
11          democracy;

12       (2) Workshops on government processes, monitoring of  
13          boards and commissions by volunteers, media literacy  
14          and storytelling programs, training for civic  
15          leadership, community improvement projects, and  
16          neighborhood support for vulnerable persons;

17       (3) Civics courses for employment, volunteer, and civic  
18          project purposes, and special civics designations for  
19          advanced civics programs for preference in hiring,  
20          grant applications, and procurement of services from  
21          participating organizations;



1       (4) Participation of the department of education, public  
2       access room, university of Hawaii Matsunaga institute  
3       for peace; leadership programs such as fellowships and  
4       internships; nonprofit organizations and socially  
5       responsible corporations; and the United Nations  
6       global citizen education program; and

7       (5) Student and youth civic programs, student government  
8       leadership classes, and student and youth programs,  
9       conferences, and activities; democracy schools and  
10       kindness curricula; school newspapers and student  
11       journalists; and volunteers for field trips and  
12       community projects.

13       (c) For the purposes of this section, "Aloha Spirit" has  
14       the same meaning as defined in section 5-7.5."

15       SECTION 3. Section 27-1, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
16       amended to read as follows:

17       "**§27-1 Functions of statewide concern.** The purpose of the  
18       chapter is to fix responsibility for certain functions, which  
19       are of statewide concern, in the state government. These  
20       functions which are declared to be state functions are as  
21       follows:



- 1           (1) Planning, construction, improvement and maintenance of  
2           public school facilities and grounds and the  
3           transportation of school children; provided that  
4           nothing in this paragraph shall preclude the several  
5           counties from expending their own funds to supplement  
6           state funds;
- 7           (2) Burial of indigents;
- 8           (3) Planning, construction, improvement, maintenance, and  
9           operation of public hospitals and other public health  
10          and medical facilities;
- 11          (4) Rendering of medical treatment and hospitalization  
12          services to state and county pensioners;
- 13          (5) Administration and operation of district courts; [~~and~~]
- 14          (6) Providing information and services to the public  
15          through joint cooperation with the several  
16          counties[~~-~~]; and
- 17          (7) Coordinating a civics program that is guided by the  
18          Aloha Spirit; educates and instills the values of  
19          Aloha throughout the State; and promotes civic values,  
20          norms, and practices in the activities of government,  
21          institutions, and life of the community.



1                   For the purposes of this paragraph, "Aloha  
2                   Spirit" has the same meaning as defined in section  
3                   5-7.5."

4           SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general  
5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$250,000 or so much  
6 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the  
7 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year  
8 2026-2027 for the establishment of two full-time equivalent (2.0  
9 FTE) civic education specialist positions to support civics  
10 education within the department of education.

11           The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
12 of education for the purposes of this Act.

13           SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general  
14 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$50,000 or so much  
15 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the  
16 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year  
17 2026-2027 for a civics program to be conducted by the public  
18 access room.

19           The sums appropriated shall be expended by the legislative  
20 reference bureau for the purposes of this Act.



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1           SECTION 6. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed  
2 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

3           SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

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INTRODUCED BY: *Frederic J.*



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**Report Title:**

DAGS; DOE; UH; LRB; PAR; Hawaii Civics Collaborative; Aloha Spirit; Civics Education; Democracy; Positions; Appropriations

**Description:**

Establishes the Hawaii Civics Collaborative within the Department of Accounting and General Services to promote civics engagement and perpetuate the Aloha Spirit. Requires the Department of Education, University of Hawaii Matsunaga Institute for Peace, Public Access Room, and other community organizations to facilitate civic engagement education statewide. Establishes two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) civic education specialist positions within the Department of Education. Appropriates funds.

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