

JAN 23 2025

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

(1) Members of the PACE Commission;

(2) One appointee by each of the following:

(A) Governor;

(B) Lieutenant governor;

(C) Chief justice;

(D) President of the senate;

(E) Speaker of the house of representatives;

(F) Superintendent of education;

(G) President of the university of Hawaii; and

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

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

(4) The chairperson of the collaborative shall be
appointed jointly by the president of the senate and
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;



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

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

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

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

"§27-1 Functions of statewide concern. The purpose of the chapter is to fix responsibility for certain functions, which are of statewide concern, in the state government. These functions which are declared to be state functions are as 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.



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.

4

INTRODUCED BY: 



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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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