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**BILL ANALYSIS** | Center for 1776 & Center for Education Opportunity

# ANALYSIS OF IOWA HF 2544: THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM ACT, SECTION 1

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## TOPLINE POINTS

[Iowa's Social Studies Curriculum Act](#) would have accomplished the following:

- ★ Used portions of the America First Policy Institute's model policy, [The Social Studies Curriculum Act](#), to establish modules based on accurate teaching of American history and address record-low history and civics scores.
- ★ Presented five units of social studies emphasizing historical figures, civic virtues, and ideals of liberty.
- ★ Provided Iowa students with an evidence-based America First education that emphasizes our Nation's praiseworthy stances throughout history

## Overview

Legislation like Iowa's [HF2544](#) would have mandated historically accurate teaching and emphasized the achievements of American ideals, both of which are necessary in the age of academic revisionism. American youth must be prepared for the rights and responsibilities of citizenship before they enter society independently. According to the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), in 2022:

- The average U.S. history score in eighth grade decreased by five points from 2018 and nine points from 2014.
- 40% of eighth-grade students fell below the "basic" level in U.S. history, a larger percentage than in 2018.
- In civics, 31% of eighth-grade students were below basic, and only 22% were at or above the Proficient level.

A [2021 Fordham Institute study](#) evaluating the content, rigor, and clarity of state standards gave Iowa a "D" in civics and an "F" in U.S. history. Scores in these subjects have been falling nationally since 2014, and with this bill, Iowa would have taken a necessary step toward improving the state's curriculum and restoring civic literacy. This bill would have enabled students to pursue truth



and to learn about the deeply held American values of cultural liberty and freedom. Moreover, it would have provided students with historical knowledge about key events that shaped our world and approach to governance.

Although the bill did not pass this session, AFPI encourages Iowa and all other states to adopt legislation like this. This bill analysis is intended to guide future efforts, both in Iowa and other states, to craft legislation that will help reverse national declines in civic education and put American students back on a path toward greatness.

### Bill Summary of Iowa’s HF2544, Section 1:

\*Policy provisions that are also found in [AFPI’s model policy](#) are underlined—all italicized text is verbatim from the bill.

**Iowa teachers would teach American history and assume the original intent of key documents. Teachers would not be permitted to impose their own viewpoints or seek to paint America solely in a negative light.**

*Section 1 of the bill would require Iowa schools to educate grades one through six on the following:*

- *Workings of the federal, state, and local levels of government.*
- *Rights and responsibilities of citizens of the United States and the state of Iowa.*
- *History of political, religious, economic, social, and cultural liberty in Western civilization, the United States, and the state of Iowa.*
- *Exemplary figures in Western civilization, the United States, and the state of Iowa who have fought to secure liberty, the cultural heritage of Western civilization, the United States, and the state of Iowa.*
- *Geography of the United States and the state of Iowa.*
- *Meaning of the United States flag.*

**Teachers and counselors would teach students that America is the land of opportunity and that [alternative pathways for high school graduates](#) are available—not just those that require a college degree.**

*Section 1 of the bill would require Iowa schools to offer career exploration and development in at least one grade level. This curriculum would have to:*

- *Prepare students to appropriately prepare individual career and academic plans.*
- *Incorporate foundational career and technical education concepts.*
- *Incorporate relevant 21st-century skills to facilitate career readiness and introduce students to career opportunities within the local community.*

**History would not be taught in a way that demonizes America or its military by providing a biased, one-sided narrative. Teachings would include an in-depth examination of America’s praiseworthy accomplishments.**

*Section 1 of the bill would require Iowa schools to teach “the study of and devotion to the United States’ exceptional and praiseworthy history.” This would have to include:*

- *The political and military narrative of the causes and progress of the American Revolution.*



- *The basic political, diplomatic, and military history of the United States.*

**Iowa teachers would teach their students about freedom of religion and would cultivate knowledge of important religious texts from major religions. Mentions of God and the interventions of Providence in America’s history would *not* be stricken from the classroom.**

*Section 1 of the bill would require Iowa schools to teach “the basic political, diplomatic, and military history of the United States, which would have to include:*

- *The period of discovery, early colonies, the War of Independence, the Civil War, the expansion of the United States to its present boundaries, World War I, World War II, the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, and the period of time from the September 11 attacks to the present day, which shall incorporate the study of primary source documents.*

**Teachers would have to teach eighth-grade students using an evidence-based approach to economics and not hide or obscure the failures of non-market-based systems. Students would learn the value of a free enterprise system.**

*Section 1 of the bill would require Iowa schools to educate eighth-grade students on:*

- *How Iowans have impacted government, policies, issues, and procedures over the years.*
- *The free enterprise system and its benefits.*
- *The failures of economic systems of communist regimes and the difference between capitalist and communist economic systems.*

## **Conclusion**

Iowa’s legislation would have taken a critical step toward improving student outcomes in history and civics. The state is actively fighting back against increasingly common leftist pedagogies that paint America as a country of malintent and oppression. Teaching students in an accurate and comprehensive manner would help to rectify low test scores in Iowa, and other states should quickly follow suit to address this national crisis. Our youth *must* be taught the truth about America. Read the full bill text [here](#).

