

House Resolution 196 of 2004
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Reps. Hart, Accavitti, Anderson, Bieda, Brandenburg, Byrum, Caswell, DeRossett, Elkins, Farhat, Gillard, Gleason, Hager, Hopgood, Jamnick, Kolb, Kooiman, Lipsey, Meyer, Milosch, Minore, Nitz, Palmer, Phillips, Richardville, Sak, Sheltroun, Shulman, Smith, Spade, Tobocman, Vander Veen, Voorhees and Zelenko offered the following resolution:

A resolution to encourage Michigan's high schools to put a priority on teaching state and local government from a Michigan perspective.

Whereas, MCL 380.1166 states that “In all public and nonpublic schools in this state regular courses of instruction shall be given in the constitution of the United States, in the constitution of Michigan, and in the history and present form of government of the United States, Michigan, and its political subdivisions . . .”; and

Whereas, The long-term success of our system of self-government depends upon the participation of its citizenry. Knowledge of government must extend far beyond an understanding of the federal level; it is essential that citizens also understand the structure and interaction of local and state governments, for these are far closer to the everyday lives of most people; and

Whereas, The lack of knowledge regarding the structures, processes, and services of state and local government has become increasingly evident as we see voter turnout for key local elections drop to deplorable rates of 5 to 20 percent. The scarcity of Michigan-specific state and local government curricula being utilized in Michigan classrooms is clearly not helpful and likely contributes to the poor level of participation by Michigan citizens at the state and local levels; and

Whereas, Decades ago, there seemed to be far more emphasis on civics education that prepared students to be informed, fully functioning members of the local community and institutions of government. We need to reconnect students with local government in order to provide them the knowledge necessary to be enthusiastic and participating members of their communities; and

Whereas, The citizens of Michigan have a responsibility to vote, volunteer, and become competent and engaged citizens within their communities. Without learning specifically how state and local government works in Michigan, citizens will not understand and be able to fulfill their responsibilities; and

Whereas, State and local government curricula must include classroom activities, simulations on state and local government issues, assessment, and activities to promote citizen involvement; be closely aligned with the Michigan Curriculum Framework Content standards and benchmarks in social studies; and should develop and refine social studies process skills, such as inquiry, public discourse, and decision making; and

Whereas, Curricula has been developed to meet these standards and provide valuable instruction on citizen participation at the state and local levels; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we encourage Michigan high schools to put a priority on teaching state and local government from a Michigan perspective. We urge that Michigan-specific materials, produced in conjunction with Michigan teachers, governmental units, and associations, be used; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Michigan Department of Education and to appropriate educational organizations in our state.