H. R. _____

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to increase civics education programs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Hastings introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to increase civics education programs, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Civics Learning Act of 2019”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:
(1) The dearth of civics lessons available to students across the United States has helped to foster a political climate that is deeply partisan and divided.

(2) Polarized party politics in the United States has fractured public morale in our institutions and has created an environment in which people are less likely to be well-informed on the current state of affairs and to participate in the political process.

(3) According to the Annenberg Constitution Day Civics Survey conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania—

(A) in 2018, only 32 percent of people in the United States surveyed were capable of naming all 3 branches of Government, while 33 percent of Americans were not able to name any of the branches of government;

(B) in 2018, 30 percent of people in the United States surveyed knew that the Senate is in charge of Supreme Court nominee confirmations; and

(C) in 2017, 37 percent could not name any of the rights guaranteed under the First Amendment.
(4) In 2014, only 23 percent of eighth graders were found to have performed at or above the proficient level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress civics exam conducted by the National Center of Education Studies.

(5) A lack of knowledge on the basics of the structure of our democratic republic creates an increasingly ill-prepared electorate which overtime has, and will continue to, contribute to a weakened democracy.

SEC. 3. AMENDMENTS TO THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1965.

Section 2233 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6663) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by inserting “and prioritize innovative civics learning and teaching, including by encouraging” after “to encourage”; and

(B) by inserting “(including students and teachers at high-need schools (as defined in section 2221))” before the period;

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) by inserting “and appropriated under subsection (h) of this section” after “2231(b)(2)”; and
(B) by striking paragraph (2) and inserting the following:

“(2) may include—

“(A) hands-on civic engagement activities for teachers and students;

“(B) activities about the history and principles of the Constitution of the United States, including the Bill of Rights;

“(C) before-school, during-school, after-school, and extracurricular activities;

“(D) activities that include service learning and community service projects that are linked to school curriculum;

“(E) activities that encourage and support student participation in school governance; and

“(F) online and video game based learning.”;

(3) in subsection (c), by striking paragraph (3) and inserting the following:

“(3) DIVERSITY OF PROJECTS.—

“(A) DIVERSITY OF GRANTS.—In awarding grants under this section, the Secretary shall ensure that, to the extent practicable, grants are distributed among eligible entities that will serve geographically diverse areas, including
urban, suburban, and rural areas, and public elementary schools.

“(B) Allocation of Grant Funding.—

To the extent practicable based on the applications received under subsection (d), the Secretary shall ensure that—

“(i) not less than 30 percent of the grant funds under this section are awarded to eligible entities that serve elementary school students and teachers;

“(ii) not less than 30 percent of the grant funds under this section are awarded to eligible entities that serve middle school students and teachers; and

“(iii) not more than 40 percent of the grant funds under this section are awarded to eligible entities that serve high school students and teachers.”;

(4) in subsection (d), by inserting “, and containing such information,” after “manner”; and

(5) by adding at the end the following:

“(f) Grant Award Preference.—In awarding grants under this section, the Secretary shall give preference to applications for programs that carry out the ac-
activities listed in subsection (b)(2) for the purpose of
strengthening civics education and learning.

“(g) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after
the end of each fiscal year, the Secretary shall submit to
the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the
House of Representatives and the Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate a report
containing—

“(1) a description of each eligible entity award-
ed a grant under this section during the preceding
fiscal year;

“(2) a description of whether each such eligible
entity was able to met each of the purposes under
subsection (a), and if so, how such eligible entity
was able to meet such purposes; and

“(3) any recommendations for continuation of
the grant program under this section.

“(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—In ad-
dition to the amounts reserved under section 2231(b)(2),
there are authorized to be appropriated $30,000,000 to
carry out this section for fiscal year 2020.”.