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# AMANDA NEDWESKI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 61<sup>ST</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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January 17, 2024  
Testimony on AB 898

Thank you Chairman Kitchens and committee members for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 898 which will require DPI to establish a model civics curriculum for grades K-12, and establish a high school graduation requirement of .5 credits in civics.

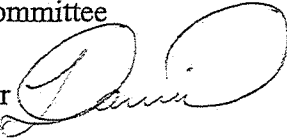
According to the 2023 Annenberg Constitution Day Civics Survey, conducted annually since 2006, only 5% of adults surveyed knew their rights under the First Amendment. Only 1 in 10 surveyed knew that the First Amendment includes their right to petition the government. The survey results indicated that 34% of participants did not know the three branches of government, and 1 in 6 did not even know one of the three branches. Annenberg's data also showed that 40% of participants reported not having civics education in high school. The American Bar Association's 2023 annual Survey of Civic Literacy revealed that 85% of participants believe that civility in America is worse than it was 10 years ago. We have a problem.

To cherish and protect our freedoms and rights, we must know what those freedoms and rights actually are. To hold the government accountable, we must know how the three branches work to check each other. AB 898 takes a small step toward remedying these gaps in knowledge that have been increasingly identified in recent years.

Specifically, this legislation requires that students come to understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens, as well as the foundation of those rights. The objective is for students to develop a sense of civic pride and an understanding of how to participate in a government of the People, by the People, for the People.

Thank you for hearing my testimony, and I am happy to answer any questions.

TO: Members, Assembly Education Committee

FROM: Daniel Henderson, Project Manager 

DATE: January 17, 2024

RE: AB 898 - Required instruction in civics in elementary and high school grades.

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Thank you for your consideration. The Wisconsin Council of Religious and Independent Schools (WCRIS) opposes AB-898.

As you may know, WCRIS represents over 600 private schools and over 100,000 students in K4-12 schools across the state. About two-thirds of those schools utilize the choice programs to carry out their mission of expanding access to the education they provide.

While the goal of AB-898 is noble and important to a free society, it is redundant to current law.

Current law requires that all graduating high school seniors in the state's private schools must pass a civic exam. This required civic exam is based on the US Citizenship test.

Our schools have used current law to create successful civic education programs that tie in their religious mission and values to create a well-rounded citizen. This success is only possible because of the autonomy that currently exists in state law.

Because AB-898 mandates curriculum standards, we believe that it's too prescriptive. It will stifle our schools' ability to create civic education that complies with their sponsoring organizations. For this reason, WCRIS opposes AB-898.

We urge lawmakers to remove private school inclusion and allow private schools to continue under current law.

Don't hesitate to contact our office if you have any questions or are in need of services.

Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Association of Christian  
Schools International

Christian Schools  
International

Diocese of Green Bay

Diocese of LaCrosse

Diocese of Madison

Diocese of Superior

Lutheran Church  
Missouri Synod  
North Wisconsin District

Lutheran Church  
Missouri Synod  
South Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Association  
of Independent Schools

Wisconsin Conference  
of Seventh Day Adventists

Wisconsin Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
Northern Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
Western Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
Southeastern Wisconsin  
District

Associate Members

PHONE  
(608) 287-1224

E-MAIL  
wcris.staff@wcris.org

WEBSITE  
www.wcris.org

ADDRESS  
110 East Main Street  
Suite 802  
Madison, WI 53703



January 17, 2024

**Assembly Committee on Education**

**Department of Public Instruction Testimony  
2023 Assembly Bill 898**

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) extends thanks to Chair Kitchens and the committee for this opportunity to offer testimony in opposition to Assembly Bill 898 (AB 898).

Early in her tenure as the duly elected State Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jill Underly set forth a plan for the Department of Public Instruction to create a K-12 scope and sequence framework with student objectives, content, and resources for civics education. The work needed to be non-partisan, teacher-friendly, and aligned with state standards. In October 2023, DPI published a K-8 scope and sequence for civics and social studies education and a high school government or civics class. This work is based on the most current research on civics and social studies education and was written by Wisconsin teachers. Additionally, DPI continues to work closely with every CESA in the state to support implementation of the scope & sequence. We have also established a statewide network of Civics Fellows, Wisconsin educators supporting teachers across the state with best practices and quality, non-partisan resources for civics education. Finally, we have established a platform for sharing resources aligned with our standards on the DPI open educational resources (OER) platform, WiseLearn. Any teacher can search for standards-aligned resources from trusted, non-partisan partners.

DPI opposes AB 898 because the bill assumes the legislature's mandate can replace or improve the quality of civics instruction offered in schools. Furthermore, infusing civics into academic offerings is continuing to build from the 2018 update to the Wisconsin Social Studies Standards and the aligned civics scope and sequence described above. DPI and our partners support teachers throughout the state with non-partisan training and resources focusing on excellence in civic literacy and civic engagement so all students can learn to become both engaged citizens and critical consumers of information. All these things go far beyond another statutory mandate from this body.

On the technical side, AB 898 fails to define "civics," "civics instruction," "civics education," "civics education curriculum," and other terms such as "civic-minded" and "civic pride." All these terms would likely need to be addressed through updates to administrative rule to be enforced. Review by legislative standing committees and the Joint Committee for Review of Administrative Rules (JCRAR) is required, and no rule can receive legislative approval except by the JCRAR. The resulting rule could be in effect, written by the legislature, through pressure and additional legislation to compel DPI to modify the proposed rule as a condition of approval. Such an outcome would disregard the work of educators to construct an administrative rule and compromise the constitutional separation that exists for the state superintendent to administer public education.

Wis. Stat. sec. 121.02 (1) enumerates the standards that all public-school districts in Wisconsin must follow. The standards include the subject areas for which public schools are required to provide regular instruction to students (i.e., reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, health, etc.). While state statute directs public schools to teach specific subjects and topics, it does not dictate specific curriculum to be used for instruction. Similarly, while DPI develops the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards (WMAS), locally elected school boards adopt academic standards in each subject area to best serve their local community. This is a tenet of the local control philosophy that is foundational to public schools in Wisconsin – that school boards determine the specific standards to adopt and the curriculum that will be used for instruction on required subjects and topics within the school district's classrooms.

AB 898 fails to provide funding for implementation to school districts for materials and teacher training that would be required to make a shift to cover the mandates. In addition, schools would be forced to expend administrative staff time to gather and report their implementation efforts to DPI. This bill could force some school districts to incur additional costs to implement this new statutory graduation requirement. Rural school districts, already facing staffing shortages and budget shortfalls, are most likely to be impacted by this bill. Potential costs could include increased staffing to teach the course, developing course curriculum, and verifying credit completion for graduation. Without funding, this would become yet another unfunded mandate for already underfunded school districts to absorb.

AB 898 imposes enormous requirements on DPI without recognizing the efforts required by both local schools and the department. This legislature continues to bring forward proposals that dictate the actions of the department and local schools and districts, without an understanding of the cost in time and effort those changes require. These decisions come with tradeoffs and require other important items to be reduced.

DPI opposes AB 898 as redundant and unnecessary, infringing on local control through yet another unfunded mandate, and interfering in a transparent DPI process that relies on teaching professionals to develop standards and curriculum rather than partisan legislators.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Kevyn Radcliffe, Legislative Liaison, at [kevyn.radcliffe@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:kevyn.radcliffe@dpi.wi.gov) or (608) 264-6716.



January 17, 2024

**Assembly Committee on Education  
Testimony Submission for AB 898**

We want to thank Chairman Kitchens and members of the committee for the opportunity to give written testimony on Assembly Bill 898. We submit information on behalf of the Wisconsin Civic Learning Coalition (WCLC), a volunteer network of organizations and individuals who seek to strengthen nonpartisan civic education in Wisconsin.

WCLC aims to support schools and teachers in preparing students to be committed and effective participants in civic life. Civic organizations, educators, and community members from across the political spectrum have joined our coalition.

We applaud this committee's interest in civic education and appreciate the opportunity to focus the attention of policy makers on this crucial public good. Civic learning is essential to ensuring each and every person in Wisconsin is equipped with the necessary tools to engage as informed members of our self-governing society.

Wisconsin is one of just a handful of states that does not require a high school civics class for graduation, and more than a quarter of students never take a dedicated civics or government class. We've written extensively about the importance of enabling broader access to high quality civic education. We see the bill before you today as an opportunity to open a conversation about how to strengthen civic learning in our state.

Many of our members support a civics graduation requirement as a first step in ensuring that all students in Wisconsin have the knowledge, skills and dispositions they need to lead successful civic lives. The existing bill has some important strengths.

- ❖ It requires schools to include civics concepts that largely align with existing civics curriculum.
- ❖ The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has recently released a High School Civics Scope and Sequence that closely aligns with the content required by the bill.
- ❖ Wisconsin has many active curriculum providers and partners to provide resources and professional development if funding were made available.
- ❖ The bill gives districts latitude to adopt a variety of curriculum and pedagogy to fulfill the requirements, and maintains the value of local control.

**WCLC does not take a position for or against AB 898 at this time. We would welcome the opportunity to work with this committee and other partners to amend the bill to address the following:**

**We are concerned that the development of this bill did not include input from Wisconsin educators, administrators, and school leaders.** We recommend working over time with civic education experts, curricular providers, and school stakeholders to leverage their experience and expertise to strengthen the bill. Consultation with educators could support changes such as:

- ❖ Adding core civics concepts currently absent from the bill such as content about elections; exploration of current issues; state, local and tribal government; the role of courts; and the legislative process.
- ❖ Supporting learning and engagement through proven practices in civics education, including deliberation of contested issues, information literacy, and simulations.
- ❖ Include more modern application of how founding ideas and documents have been applied over time, and how these issues are relevant today.

**We also believe deeply that civics education should be non-partisan.** Any bill laying out requirements should be developed in a bipartisan, collaborative fashion, reflecting common ground. The WCLC will not be able to support a bill without bipartisan authors, sponsors, and a process that involves input from colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

**The current bill imposes significant costs on DPI and all schools and school districts across the state.** Funding will be needed to support additional work on civic education within DPI, and to coordinate and provide professional development for teachers to implement new requirements. Other states that have implemented new civics requirements have allocated funding on the order of \$1 million per year to support similar measures. The WCLC recommends this level of financial support to avoid an unfunded mandate that will strain the capacity of schools to implement the law with fidelity.

**We do not believe rule promulgation is an appropriate tool for creating a model curriculum.** The details of civics curricular content must be flexible to meet the localized needs of schools and districts and responsive to current issues and events. Administrative rule promulgation is not the standard process for making curriculum recommendations.

We reiterate that this bill is a promising starting point. The recommendations outlined here reflect a sample of the ideas generated by members of our coalition, composed of 19 organizations and over 200 individuals. We would welcome further opportunities to engage with members of this committee, bill authors, or others, in order to discuss ways to strengthen the bill and gain bipartisan support. The civic mission of schools has never been more important than it is now. Thank you for taking time to engage in discussion about this important matter.

Yours in Service,

Michael Blauw and Kate Ullman

Co-Chairs of the Wisconsin Civic Learning Coalition



TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Education

FROM: Rachel Ver Velde, Senior Director of Workforce, Education & Employment Policy

DATE: January 17, 2024

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 898, required instruction in civics education

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Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Assembly Bill 898. We thank Representative Nedweski and Senator Wanggaard for authoring this important legislation which will create much needed model curriculum for Wisconsin's youth, educating them on American founding principles.

WMC is the largest general business association in Wisconsin, representing approximately 3,800 member companies of all sizes, and from every sector of the economy. Since 1911, our mission has been to make Wisconsin the most competitive state in the nation to do business. That mission includes making sure Wisconsin's youth are ready and willing to participate in the workforce.

In May 2023, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) released their 2022 proficiency scores. According to the NAEP data, four-fifths of students were not proficient in civics, with 31% of students below basic achievement levels. These unacceptably low scores show that too many young people lack an understanding of the founding principles of the United States of America and our representative democracy. They have not been taught how or even why they should petition their government. They are unaware that our freedoms and rights are enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. Unfortunately, our schools have failed to teach our children American exceptionalism and the dire consequences of socialism, communism and totalitarianism.

The intention of public education is to create a ready and capable workforce. It is essential for employers to have employees that understand our governing principles, economic freedom and individual responsibility. If our workforce does not understand these basic principles, they will be unable to fully appreciate their ability to succeed.

WMC supports the development of a model curriculum to teach these founding principles, our system of government and a comparison of other nations' governing systems to our own. Assembly Bill 898 astutely adds the additional requirement that one-half credit of the three-credit social studies requirement for high school graduation must be for civics instruction. This will ensure that Wisconsin's students receive a basic level of training from the model curriculum before they exit the K-12 education system.

WMC urges Members of the Assembly Committee on Education to vote in favor of Assembly Bill 898 to ensure our state's youth are well informed and responsible citizens.

*Due to low test scores, the WMC Foundation recently announced a statewide and four regional Civics Bee contests for students in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. The winner of the statewide competition will be invited to compete in the National Civics Bee championship. WMC is hopeful that this competition will improve civics literacy and help students become better informed citizens. Please see the attached brochure and reach out if you would like any additional information on the competition.*



Calling all middle school students

# National Civics Bee Applications Now Open!

Nominations Due By January 8



National  
Civics Bee

WMC  
FOUNDATION

## Calling all middle school students

Share your ideas and show off your civic skills  
in the National Civics Bee.

### ABOUT THE BEE

The National Civics Bee is an annual competition that encourages young Americans to engage in civics and contribute to their communities. In the first round of the contest, students will participate in an essay competition. Judges will then select 20 finalists to participate in the final round: **a live quiz event testing civics knowledge.**

#### LOCAL

**\$500**

cash prize

FIRST PLACE

**\$250**

cash prize

SECOND PLACE

**\$125**

cash prize

THIRD PLACE

#### STATE

**\$1,000**

cash prize

FIRST PLACE

**\$500**

cash prize

SECOND PLACE

**\$250**

cash prize

THIRD PLACE

#### NATIONAL

**More than \$50,000!**

State Finalists who advance to the national competition will compete for prizes worth more than \$50,000.



### HOW TO ENTER

If you are a 6th, 7th, or 8th grade student with an idea about using civics to solve a problem in your community, review the rules and guidelines on this page:

[wmcfoundation.org/national-civics-bee/](http://wmcfoundation.org/national-civics-bee/)

Next, complete the online submission form, including contact information for your parent or guardian, and upload (preferred method) or mail your 500-word essay.

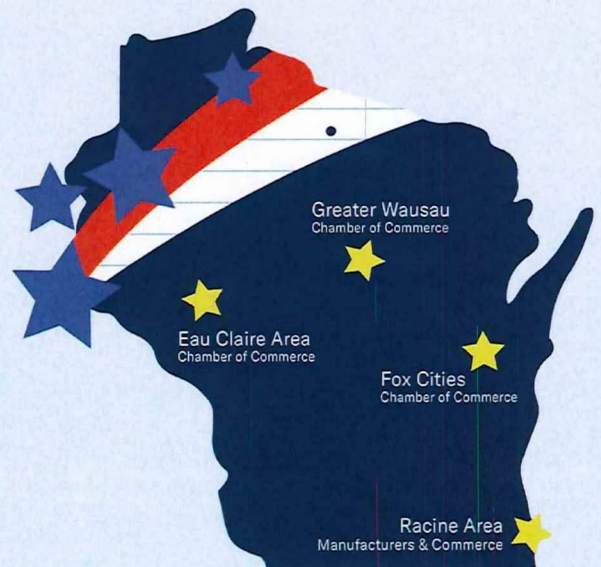
Submit your essay to the participating local chamber closest to your hometown:

[Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Racine Area Manufacturers & Commerce](#)

[Wausau Chamber of Commerce](#)



See reverse for application details

Calling all middle school students

# National Civics Bee Applications Now Open!

Nominations Due By January 8



National  
Civics Bee

WMC  
FOUNDATION



## ESSAY TOPIC

**Identify a problem facing your community. How might a citizen solve the problem?  
Write a 500-word essay that includes the following:**

- What is the problem, and how do different members in your community or neighborhood view it?
- What civic principles or systems could help to address the problem?
- What primary sources, such as the Declaration of Independence or the United States Constitution, provide supporting evidence or examples for your idea or recommendation?
- How might members of your community or neighborhood bring your idea or recommendation to life?



## DEADLINE

**Essays must be received by January 8, 2024 at 11:59 p.m.**

*Submit your essay to the participating local chamber closest to your hometown.*



## JUDGING CRITERIA

**Students' essays will be evaluated based on how well they:**

- Demonstrate an understanding of civics
- Acknowledge and address opposing points of view
- Use primary sources
- Clearly describe an idea innovation or new to you

Visit [wmcfoundation.org/national-civics-bee/](https://wmcfoundation.org/national-civics-bee/) for more details!

**QUESTIONS? Contact [Michelle Grajkowski](#), Senior Director of Business World, (608) 661-6904.**



National  
Civics Bee

WMC  
FOUNDATION

**Assembly Bill 898: Requiring a Civics Class in High School**

**Assembly Committee on Education**

**Written Testimony of Jaclyn Jecha**

**January 17, 2024**

Thank you, Chairman Kitchens and the Honorable Assembly Committee on Education members, for holding a public hearing on AB 898, which would require a civics course for Wisconsin students.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony. I am a social studies educator, teaching AP U.S. Government, AP Comparative Government, on-level government, philosophy, and American history. Currently, my school district does not require a civics course for graduation. I was named the James Madison Fellow for Wisconsin in 2021. I write not only to encourage non-partisan civics education but also to encourage future investment in it. While AB 898 is a step in the right direction, some concerns about the bill's current state should be considered and debated before moving forward.

A recent email from the Council on Foreign Relations, dated January 14, 2024, highlighted conflicts to watch in 2024. Two of the conflicts to watch were centered in the United States and labeled "high-priority": (1) Growing political polarization and (2) increased risk for a cyber attack. While my expertise does not allow me to speak to potential cyber-attacks, it does give me insight into political polarization within the country; I see it in my classroom. With the amplification of echo chambers through mass media, there is little question as to why Americans are politically polarized. While civic education will not solve political polarization completely, it will give students the skills necessary to participate actively in American democracy and reduce some polarization.

All Americans – not just students – must engage in critical thinking to discern between misleading messages and be exposed to diverse ideas to discourage further polarization. They must start talking to one another and working towards a common goal. Best practices in civic education encourage independent thinking skills, build content knowledge, encourage civil dialogue, and provide avenues for service learning. Of course, the civics classroom is not the only place where these skills are taught; however, a required civics class will ensure that all students have exposure to all of the necessary skills before they graduate from high school.

AB 898's introduction and discussion are positive steps. The bill, as written, allows some local control of curriculum and pedagogy, gives educators some flexibility in teaching while providing helpful guidance, and will make any transition more manageable because of the Wisconsin DPI's most recent work with the civics content scope and sequence. However, the bill's content requirements must be written in a more neutral, bi-partisan way, incorporating the voices of Wisconsin educators, administrators, and school leaders. Civic education, history, and political science experts should also be heard to include the best practices in pedagogy, historical thinking, and political science processes. Specific content requirements without these considerations are problematic. A well-rounded civics curriculum should not only have content. Other considerations for the curriculum should include skills such as civil dialogue, media literacy, and inquiry-based learning. Additionally, concepts introduced in the Founding Period should be applied over time while addressing their current state in modern American politics to provide a more nuanced view of our political ideals.

Any new course requirement will ultimately require training through professional development. However, the bill does not provide funding to coordinate professional development. In other states, \$1 million has been allocated to support similar measures. Civic education nationwide needs to be more funded, especially in comparison to STEM subjects. This is not to

disparage STEM – these subjects are necessary for the development of our country. At the same time, not all students will become engineers or mathematicians; all students will have the opportunity to become active participants in our democracy, but they need the skills to do so. These skills must be taught, and they need funding to support instruction and teacher training.

Civic education is vital to the survival of our democracy, and the Founders knew it. In January 1786, Thomas Jefferson wrote to George Washington, “It is an axiom in my mind that our liberty can never be safe but in the hands of the people themselves... with a certain degree of instruction.” This bill is a step in the right direction but requires additional stakeholder conversations.

Thank you again for allowing me to provide written testimony on this critical issue. Please contact me with any further questions at (262) 385-5300 or [jwjecha@gmail.com](mailto:jwjecha@gmail.com).

Jaclyn Jecha  
527 N. 50th Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53208

*This testimony is personal and does not reflect the views of the school district that employs me or any affiliated organizations.*

**From:** Sarah Kopplin <[sarahkopplin@wcsswi.org](mailto:sarahkopplin@wcsswi.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 15, 2024 1:36 PM  
**To:** Delaporte, Bob <[Bob.Delaporte@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Bob.Delaporte@legis.wisconsin.gov)>  
**Cc:** [wicivics@gmail.com](mailto:wicivics@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** WI SB 837 AB 898 Comments to Include in Legislative Materials

**I request that my comments be distributed to the committee members, and included in the Legislative Council materials for Civics Bill (SB 837, AB 898)**

Dear Members of the Wisconsin Legislature,

I am writing to share my thoughts on the proposed Civics Bill (SB 837, AB 898). Overall, I believe this bill has several strengths that can contribute positively to civic education in Wisconsin, but there are changes that need to be made to truly allow for high quality civics education to take place in Wisconsin classrooms. Please halt your progress and allow a collaborative partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Wisconsin Educators to take place to make this bill the most successful that it can be to best benefit Wisconsin's students.

**Strengths of this Bill:**

- **Stand-alone Requirement:** The introduction of a stand-alone requirement for civic education is a commendable development. Ensuring that all students receive civic education is crucial for fostering an informed and engaged citizenry.
- **Active Participation and Advocacy:** The bill's language encouraging active participation and advocacy aligns well with best practices and goals of civic education. This emphasis can empower students to become active and responsible members of society to help preserve and improve our system of government to stabilize and improve our future in America.
- **Local Control:** The provision allowing districts to use a variety of curriculum and pedagogy provides districts with the flexibility to tailor civic education to their local context, maintaining a crucial aspect of local control. Issues in rural and urban areas are vastly different and the diverse mosaic of Wisconsin's peoples show that allowing for local control will best support educators to provide high quality civics education for our students in all communities across the Badger State.
- **Alignment with Existing Content:** The requirement for certain concepts aligning with existing civics course content ensures continuity while not prohibiting exploration of additional topics or pedagogy.
- **Flexibility for Teachers:** The leeway provided in the bill, while posing both advantages and disadvantages, seems to offer useful guidance for teachers while maintaining necessary flexibility.
-

- **Protecting Access to Civics:** Enshrining the requirement in state law protects civics from elimination. There has been a nationwide reduction in the amount of social studies that is taught in classrooms (less than 10% of elementary instructional time is devoted to social studies education). This legislative backing is essential for the continuity of civic education and to helping our students to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to be informed members of their communities.
- 
- **Alignment with Wisconsin DPI's Recommended K-12 Civics Scope and Sequence:** The recent release of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's Recommended K-12 Civics Scope & Sequence provides a High School Civics Scope and Sequence which complements the bill, providing a structured framework for implementation. A natural partnership between the lawmakers who proposed this bill and the DPI is clear!
- 
- **Potential for Resources and PD:** The availability of active curriculum partners for resource provision and professional development is promising, provided funding is made available. There are excellent partner organizations that provide nonpartisan educational materials to help best support civics education.

However, despite these strengths, there are some significant challenges and concerns that need careful consideration and you need to revise your Bill to address these concerns.

#### **Challenges/Concerns:**

- **Rule Promulgation Process:** The appropriateness of the rule promulgation process for approving a model curriculum needs clarification. Justification for this approach should be clearly communicated to everyone. Not doing so would open the door for dangerous curriculum construction practices.
- 
- **Bipartisanship is Critical:** Civics education should remain non-partisan. It is imperative that any bill on civic education is developed in a bipartisan manner, reflecting common ground across parties through collaborative discussions. The goal of Civics education should be to help learners gain knowledge, skills and dispositions to preserve and improve our structure of governing and not to indoctrinate students with the notion that one partisan view of civic education is right.
- 
- **Lack of Funding:** Adequate funding is crucial to support the work within the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, coordinate efforts, and fund professional development for successful implementation. Similar measures in other states have required substantial funding- this funding has made their efforts to establish civics curriculum and courses successful. Without providing funding, there will be no success in implementation.
- 
- **Neutral Language:** Some sections of the bill may benefit from using more neutral language to ensure inclusivity and avoid potential bias or partisanship.

Revision of the bill through bipartisan lenses and through the lens of educational experts is vital.

- 
- **Educator Input:** The absence of input from Wisconsin educators, administrators, and school leaders in crafting a bill with specific content requirements raises concerns about the representation of on-the-ground perspectives. Wisconsin has expert educators with incredible experience who are qualified to provide input and work in a bipartisan way to construct successful educational goals. You must allow time for educator input before moving forward with this bill.
- 
- **Oral Histories Section:** The section on oral histories appears out of place and would require additional funding for the creation and curation of resources. You cannot require something of this magnitude without funding to curate the resources.
- 
- **Historical Focus:** The bill's historical emphasis seems somewhat "frozen in time," lacking discussion on how founding ideas and documents apply over time and their relevance in contemporary contexts. As a woman I especially take issue with this because if we allowed the interpretation or examination of our nation's history to stay frozen in time, I would not be allowed to engage in society as I do now. The reality is that civics education should include analysis of primary source documents and analyze their relevance and meaning in our ever changing world. Experts in education and history and pedagogy will tell you that best practice in historical thinking and analysis align with the C3 Framework and also with Wisconsin's Social Studies Standards Inquiry strand for how historical thinking should be framed and approached. This bill does not allow for inquiry to take place in history, but only one narrative to be provided for students. Providing one narrative in a history or civics classroom is not a productive or bipartisan way for our students to learn and become successful members of society.
- 
- **Missing Core Concepts:** Some core civics concepts, including elections, exploration of current contested issues, state and local government, tribal government, the role of courts, and the legislative process, are notably absent. These are important and vital aspects of Civic education that need to be included in any civic education. Students need to have the opportunity to learn about how elections work, examine current contested issues, see how state, local and tribal government works, understand the role of courts and our legislative process, and practice engaging in productive civil discourse. Please allow time and teacher/expert voice to work in partnership to add these vital core concepts.
- 
- **Missing Best Practices:** The bill lacks mention of best practices in civics education, such as deliberation of contested issues, information literacy, simulation of authentic civic roles, and inquiry-based learning. These all must be included in order to cultivate the skills, knowledge and dispositions that truly translate to productive and lasting American civic minded engagement in communities. We cannot expect that this proposed civics education will be successful for students if they are unable to develop skills, but are only allowed to absorb a narrative of information about civics. Please allow time for education experts to work in collaboration with you to revise this bill.

In conclusion, while the Civics Bill presents a significant step forward, it is crucial to address the outlined concerns to ensure a comprehensive, effective, and inclusive civic education framework for the students of Wisconsin. I offer my services as a 2023 Wisconsin Teacher of the Year, a social studies educator with 21 years of experience, the President of the Wisconsin Council for the Social Studies, and a CESA 1 Civics Fellow. I implore you to revise this bill in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and teacher and education experts to make this a successful endeavor for our students and the future of America.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Sarah Kopplin

[sarahkopplin@wcswi.org](mailto:sarahkopplin@wcswi.org)

Shorewood School District Educator - 21 years of experience

2023 Wisconsin Teacher of the Year

President of the Wisconsin Council for the Social Studies

CESA 1 Civics Fellow



From: Sherry Caves <cavessherry@gmail.com>  
Sent: Monday, January 15, 2024 11:33 AM  
To: Delaporte, Bob <Bob.Delaporte@legis.wisconsin.gov>  
Cc: Wisconsin Civic Learning Coalition <wicivics@gmail.com>  
Subject: citizen comments on AB 898

I am contacting the committee for two reasons.

The first is to support the idea of students having the opportunity to learn about civics in the public school system. This is an investment that needs to be made for the health of our governmental system.

The second is to ask that AB 898 not be passed. As important as civics education is, this vehicle is not a good one for the purpose. I say this because:

- the bill does not have funding
- the bill was not developed in a bi-partisan manner
- the building blocks of democracy such as elections, the role of courts and the legislature are not covered

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sherry Caves  
2317 Middleton Beach Rd.  
Middleton, WI 53562

January 16, 2024

To: the Wisconsin State Assembly Committee on Education

From: Nick Schweitzer, retired educator

Re: AB 898

2023 bills AB 898 and SB 837 would mandate civics education in high school beginning in the 2025-2026 school year.

As a member of the Wisconsin Civics Learning Coalition, I applaud this as a step in the right direction, since Wisconsin is one of the few states that does not require instruction in civics, and the importance of civics education for the health of the state and the nation is well-documented on the WCLC website, [civicswi.org](http://civicswi.org),

I have two practical concerns about the bills, that they require rule-making on a short timeline and provides no funding.

As for the actual language text of the bills, most of it is straightforward and positive, but I do have a few reservations about it, specifically

- language in the prescribed curriculum such as "patriotism", "freedom", and "the benefits of liberty", that touts American exceptionalism, and
- a reference to teaching about "victims of other nations' governing philosophies" without also encouraging lessons about victims in our own country, past and present.

Having expressed those concerns, I do hope that these bills will lead to the sort of required civics education that prepares students to be active and informed citizens.

Nick Schweitzer  
4713 Regent St.  
Madison 53705

**From:** Dean Ackmann <[ackmanndean@gmail.com](mailto:ackmanndean@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 16, 2024 1:13 PM  
**To:** Delaporte, Bob <[Bob.Delaporte@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Bob.Delaporte@legis.wisconsin.gov)>  
**Subject:** AB 898

Please accept this email as my support of Assembly Bill 898 for developing a model curriculum and instructional materials for grades k-12 on civics.

This appears to be a common sense bill that should be supported by everyone. Thank you for your work on this bill.

Regards,

Dean Ackmann  
Moms for Liberty

Assembly Bill 898

Grades K-12 Civics

Dear Assembly:

My name is Laura Ackmann and I am the Chapter Chair for Winnebago Moms for Liberty Chapter. Our organization is all about ensuring our children are educated and become contributing citizens. It is amazing that we even have to create a bill to ensure that common sense prevails.

Thank you for creating this bill and driving this extremely important initiative – this is critical to Wisconsin Children.

I am in full support of this bill.

Warm Regards,

Laura J. Ackmann

Chapter Chair – Moms for Liberty Winnebago

## Testimony in Favor of AB 898 (Dean Jeffery)

Thank you, Chairman Kitchens and Committee members, for allowing me to testify today.

My name is Dean Jeffery. I live in Pickett, WI, just southwest of Oshkosh.

Most of my career was in Engineering Project Management. I am now retired and one of my volunteer activities is hosting US Constitution classes.

These classes are professionally created videos by the Patriot Academy and highly inspirational and entertaining. The classes require minimal preparation on my part other than to get people to the classes.

Last year I ran the 6 week and then the 8 week course. We met once per week for 1.5 hours. I advertised using newspaper, flyers, and email blasts. I reached at least 1500 people. This resulted in about 6-8 people per class; Adults are simply not willing to set aside this level of weekly commitment. **This leads me to why I am here today.**

Our fellow citizens have lost sight of our Civic history inclusive of the Founding and the Constitution. Prior to getting involved with the Constitution Classes, I was one of those people and I was embarrassed by my lack of knowledge.

Here are some quick statistics;

- More than one in three people could not name a single freedom of the five protected by the First Amendment.
- Only one in four can name all three branches of the government.
- One in three can't name *any* branch of government.
- There is a recent youtube video of Senator John Kennedy (Senate Judiciary Committee) asking a nominee for US District Judge what was in Article II of the Constitution and the nominee could not provide any answer.

As the Founders stated, the Constitution must be read, studied and then taught to keep the citizenry educated on their rights and knowing when their rights have been violated. I believe that part of what drives the current political divisiveness is a lack of understanding of our Constitution and the rights of our citizenry.

My reason for being here is to provide you a data point. I can testify that trying to educate post high school adults on Civics is a tough slog. We must educate our fellow citizens while they are still in the K-12 schools.

You have right idea with AB 898 and I support this bill.

Thank you for hearing me today.