



# Legislation Proposal Template and Rubric

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## Legislation Template

Ohio Senate

[Bill Number 09]

Introduced By: Lily Howes, The Institute for Youth in Policy

Date Introduced: 24 May 2025

### **A BILL**

To standardize civic and voting education for all graduating high schoolers in the state of Ohio.

### **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF OHIO**

#### **Section 1. Title.**

This Act shall be known and may be cited as the "Ohio Voter Education Act."

#### **Section 2. Findings and Purpose.**

(a) Findings:

WHEREAS, youth (18–29 years of age) voter turnout historically falls far below turnout averages, and,

WHEREAS, polls have indicated that Ohio's youth voter turnout in 2024 was just 32% compared to overall turnout rates of 71%, and,

WHEREAS, a diverse electorate (including young voters) is essential to a strong and representative democracy, and,

WHEREAS, Ohio's youth voter turnout is consistently within the 25th percentile relative to all states, and,

WHEREAS, Ohio is one of eight states which requires students to pass a civics end-of-course exam in order to graduate, and,

WHEREAS, Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose has already introduced programs such as *Grads Vote Ohio*, which provides all graduating high school seniors with voter registration information, and,

WHEREAS, these efforts have led to increased rates of registration while turnout rates have remained stagnant, indicating disconnect lies in misinformation surrounding the importance of voting, rather than access to registration materials.



(b) Purpose:

- The General Assembly of the State of Ohio declares that a healthy democratic society depends on informed, engaged, and empowered citizens, including young voters.
- This legislation therefore seeks to mitigate nihilism and apathy towards civic participation amongst young people by mandating a standardized voter education lesson given to all graduating high school seniors.
- Rather than simply focusing on governmental processes and procedures, the lesson will touch on voting processes in the state of Ohio, different types of elections and electoral initiatives voters can participate in (such as constitutional amendments, primaries, etc.), and provide real-life examples of the impact civic participation can have on students' lives.
- Students will be able to apply the ideals they have gathered to voting in their first election with the assistance of registration packets provided on behalf of the Secretary of State's *Grads Vote Ohio* program.
- These packets shall include official voter registration forms, absentee ballot request instructions, sample ballots or mock ballots, and access to online civic tools and resources. Educators may facilitate in-person registration efforts in accordance with Ohio Revised Code 3503.06.
- If implemented correctly, this Act will lead to higher voter turnout rates in Ohio due to increased understanding of the implication surrounding voting.
- It shall also strengthen public trust in elections and government institutions by ensuring that young people enter adulthood prepared to make informed decisions that shape their communities and futures.

**Section 3. Definitions.**

For the purposes of this Act, 'voter education' shall refer to information pertaining to both the importance and procedural rules of voting in the state of Ohio.

**Section 4. Provisions.**

- (a) Beginning in the 2026/27 school year, all Ohio public secondary schools receiving state funding shall be required to provide a lesson pertaining to the subject matter discussed in Section 2 titled the *Ohio High School Civic Engagement and Voter Preparedness Curriculum*.
  - This lesson may be given in conjunction with traditional American government classes offered in Ohio high schools, or in a dedicated timespace during the final year of high school students' educational career.
  - The Curriculum shall:
    - Be provided to all students in their penultimate or ultimate year of secondary education prior to graduation.
    - Be incorporated into the traditional American Government or Civics course when possible, or additionally, presented as a separate course composed of a minimum of two 45-minute periods or 1.5 standalone hours .
    - Include, at a minimum:
      - a. Explanations of voter eligibility requirements in Ohio;
      - b. Step-by-step guidance on voter registration processes (including online, in-person, and by mail registration);



- c. Overview of various voting methods (e.g., absentee, early voting, Election Day voting);
  - d. Explanation of how to read and complete a sample ballot;
  - e. Description of local, state, and federal election structures and cycles;
  - f. Information on voter rights and protections under Ohio and federal law;
  - g. Emphasis on the importance of civic participation and nonpartisan engagement
- (b) Educators shall adhere to specific provisions outlined by the Ohio Department of Education designed to excite and educate high school students about voting procedures in Ohio.
  - Educators are permitted to take personal liberty in designing and implementing lesson plans, however their lessons shall be submitted to higher personnel no later than 30 days before delivery in order to ensure all facets of the mandated curriculum are adhered to.
  - Schools shall maintain documentation of all materials used, including assessments, multimedia content, and student-facing guides, for review upon request by state officials.
- (c) In order to ensure factuality and credibility, the Department of Education shall put together a nonpartisan committee to design the curriculum teachers are required to adhere to by January 1st, 2026.
  - The Committee shall consist of the following members, appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction:
    - a. Three licensed high school educators with at least five years of experience teaching government or civics courses;
    - b. Two representatives from county Boards of Elections;
    - c. Two political science or public policy scholars from Ohio-accredited universities, with demonstrated nonpartisan credentials;
    - d. One representative from the Office of the Secretary of State;
    - e. One student representative, aged 16–18, selected through a competitive application process.
  - The curriculum shall be updated on an as-needed basis, with mandatory editing sessions every two years in order to ensure relevant information is being provided.
- (d) When changes are made to the curriculum, communications will be made to all Ohio districts within 30 calendar days to ensure school officials are providing their students with relevant information.
  - All public secondary schools shall be required to begin implementation of the revised Curriculum by no later than the start of the following academic year.

## **Section 5. Enforcement and Implementation.**

- The Ohio Department of Education shall be responsible for the design, implementation, and enforcement of this mandated curriculum.



- District officials will be tasked with providing a list of all students who completed the curriculum annually to the Department of Education, which will be cross-checked with school roles to ensure all students have completed the program.
- This report shall be submitted to the Department of Education by July 15 of each year, certifying:
  - a. The number of students enrolled in the final year of high school;
  - b. The number of students who have completed the Curriculum;
  - c. Names and credentials of educators responsible for implementation.
- Should a district be found to have failed in implementing accurate information, the Department of Education shall be permitted to investigate the issue, which may result in:
  - a. Requiring mandatory retraining of involved educators or administrators;
  - b. Imposing a Corrective Action Plan with a timeline for compliance, subject to follow-up monitoring;
  - c. Withholding up to 2% of the district's state educational funding for that fiscal year until corrective measures are implemented;
  - d. Referring the matter to the Ohio Board of Education or State Auditor for additional review if fraud or intentional misconduct is suspected.

#### **Section 6. Appropriations**

- Funding for the implementation and maintenance of the Ohio High School Civic Engagement and Voter Preparedness Curriculum shall be drawn from appropriations made to the Ohio Department of Education under the biennial budget authorized by the General Assembly under Ohio Revised Code 3317.01 and 3301.07.
  - The General Assembly shall appropriate a minimum of \$5 million annually to cover the following:
    - a. Curriculum development and updates by the Nonpartisan Civic Instruction Committee;
    - b. Online and printed instructional materials for use in classrooms;
    - c. Professional development and training workshops for educators;
    - d. Digital infrastructure for compliance reporting and student tracking;
    - e. Public awareness campaigns targeting students and families regarding voter registration and civic participation.
  - Should additional funding become necessary, the Department of Education shall be authorized to submit a budget proposal to the Ohio State Legislature for the next fiscal year.

#### **Section 7. Severability.**

- If a provision of this Act or its implementation is found to be legally impermissible, its invalidity shall not be applied to any other provisions of the Act which could be completed without the impermissible component, and this Act shall be permitted to be severable.

#### **Section 8. Effective Date.**

- This legislation will go into effect August 1st, 2025.



#### Other Notes:

- **Font:** 12-point Times New Roman.
- **Spacing:** 1.5 or double line spacing with 1-inch margins.
- **Exceptions:** If there are specific requirements for your chosen legislative body, contact us at [fellowship@yipinstitute.org](mailto:fellowship@yipinstitute.org)

## Rubric for Evaluating Legislation

**NOTE:** The Institute for Youth in Policy Fellowship Program upholds the Institute's core value of *principled nonpartisanship*. Our evaluation of your proposed legislation is an unbiased, nonpartisan review of your Ability

Criterion	Approved	Rejected
<b>Clarity &amp; Concision</b> <i>Weight: 20%</i>	Language is clear, precise, and unambiguous.  Avoids jargon and unnecessary complexity.  Logical flow and organization.	Language is a mix of unclear, imprecise, and/or ambiguous.  Includes irrelevant jargon without context and/or unnecessary complexity.  Absence of logical flow or organization.
<b>Problem Identification &amp; Justification</b> <i>Weight: 25%</i>	Clearly identifies a relevant problem or issue.  Provides strong evidence and data to support the findings.  Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the issue.	Relevant problem or issue is unclear or unspecific.  Provides a distinct lack of strong evidence and data to support the findings.  Demonstrates a less than a working understanding of the issue.
<b>Proposed Solution &amp; Provisions</b> <i>Weight: 25%</i>	Presents a clear and feasible solution.  Provisions are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).  Demonstrates a clear understanding of the intended outcome.	Presents an unclear or impossible solution.  Provisions aren't specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, or time-bound.  Demonstrates an unclear understanding of the intended outcome.
<b>Implementation &amp; Enforcement</b> <i>Weight: 15%</i>	Clearly outlines the implementation and enforcement procedures.  Specifies the responsible agency or entity.  Addresses funding if needed.	Fails to outline the implementation and enforcement procedures clearly.  Does not specify the responsible agency or entity.  Does not address necessary funding.



<b>Formatting &amp; Professionalism</b>  <i>Weight: 15%</i>	Adheres to the provided template.  Uses proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation.  Presents a professional and polished document.	Uses own formatting.  Uses improper grammar, spelling, and/pr punctuation.  Presents an unprofessional and/or unrefined document.
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## Grading Scale:

- Approved: 80-100%
- Rejected: Below 80%

## Important Considerations for Fellow Candidates:

- **Research:** You have already written a brief on this topic! You should be well-informed, but more research *does not hurt!*
- **Specificity:** The killer of effective legislation is ambiguity. Ensure even the layperson can comprehend the proposal without help.
- **Realism:** The bill should be feasible and possible to be passed. If your topic is *assisted euthanasia*, it is not acceptable to write proposals that require the support of other countries' medical systems to perform. The topic should focus on the ethics and options within the USA.
- **Legislative Process:** DOUBLE CHECK the legislative process for the legislative body you will be submitting your proposal to!
- **Feedback:** Encourage students to seek feedback from peers, professors, and community members before submitting their legislation.
- **Contacting Legislators:** Provide students with resources and guidance on how to contact their legislators and submit their legislation.