

ASSEMBLY, No. 5667

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 19, 2026

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman MAUREEN ROWAN
District 2 (Atlantic)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes New Jersey Civics and Debate Initiative in DOE.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT establishing the New Jersey Civics and Debate Initiative in
2 the Department of Education and supplementing chapter 6 of
3 Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

7
8 1. a. The Commissioner of Education shall establish the New
9 Jersey Civics and Debate Initiative in the Department of Education.
10 The purpose of the initiative shall be to increase the availability and
11 quality of speech and debate programs in public schools.

12 b. The initiative shall support and expand access to Statewide
13 civic literacy and speech and debate programs through activities that
14 include but are not limited to:

- 15 (1) educating and training coaches and students;
- 16 (2) training judges and volunteers;
- 17 (3) promoting educational competition opportunities;
- 18 (4) leading training and leadership development experiences;
- 19 (5) establishing competition standards; and
- 20 (6) maintaining Statewide data reporting.

21 c. The initiative shall host a variety of civics and debate events
22 throughout the State and shall provide logistical support and
23 coordination support for other initiatives in the State that advance
24 speech and debate programs for students.

25 d. Funds appropriated or otherwise made available for the
26 initiative's purposes may be applied towards the following expenses of
27 the initiative:

- 28 (1) administrative operations, including staffing, insurance,
29 compliance, reporting, and infrastructure;
- 30 (2) programmatic operations, including curriculum, training,
31 summer programs, workshops, camps, and mentorship programs;
- 32 (3) tournament operations, including logistics, staff, judge training,
33 technology, awards, and regional team operations;
- 34 (4) travel, lodging, training, and transportation for participants;
- 35 (5) public-private partnership development, including sponsorship
36 and philanthropic support;
- 37 (6) membership, affiliations, and participation fees related to civics
38 education, speech, debate, leadership, and academic competition
39 programs; and
- 40 (7) any other related expense approved by the Commissioner of
41 Education.

42
43 2. The Commissioner of Education shall report annually to the
44 Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991,
45 c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), on the work and impact of the initiative.

1 3. The Legislature shall annually appropriate to the Department
2 of Education no less than \$1,450,000 to effectuate the purposes of
3 this act.

4

5 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

6

7

8

STATEMENT

9

10 This bill establishes the New Jersey Civics and Debate Initiative in
11 the Department of Education.

12 The bill directs the Commissioner of Education to establish the
13 New Jersey Civics and Debate Initiative in the Department of
14 Education. The purpose of the initiative is to increase the availability
15 and quality of speech and debate programs in public schools.

16 The bill directs the initiative to support and expand access to
17 Statewide civic literacy and speech and debate programs through
18 activities including but not limited to:

19 (1) educating and training coaches and students;

20 (2) training judges and volunteers;

21 (3) promoting educational competition opportunities;

22 (4) leading training and leadership development experiences;

23 (5) establishing competition standards; and

24 (6) maintaining Statewide data reporting.

25 The initiative is directed to host a variety of civics and debate
26 events throughout the State and to provide logistical support and
27 coordination support for other initiatives in the State that advance
28 speech and debate programs for students.

29 Under the bill, funds appropriated or otherwise made available for
30 the initiative's purposes may be applied towards the following
31 expenses of the initiative:

32 (1) administrative operations, including staffing, insurance,
33 compliance, reporting, and infrastructure;

34 (2) programmatic operations, including curriculum, training,
35 summer programs, workshops, camps, and mentorship programs;

36 (3) tournament operations, including logistics, staff, judge training,
37 technology, awards, and regional team operations;

38 (4) travel, lodging, training, and transportation for participants;

39 (5) public-private partnership development, including sponsorship
40 and philanthropic support;

41 (6) membership, affiliations, and participation fees related to civics
42 education, speech, debate, leadership, and academic competition
43 programs; and

44 (7) any other related expense approved by the Commissioner of
45 Education.

46 Finally, the bill directs the Legislature to annually appropriate
47 \$1.45 million to the Department of Education to effectuate the bill's
48 purposes.