

# LOUISIANA COMMISSION ON CIVIC EDUCATION

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**Committee Staff:**

Tammy Crain-Waldrop  
Legislative Researcher

Candace M. Shields  
Senior Secretary

## Louisiana Commission on Civic Education

### APPROVED MINUTES

May 20, 2022

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education was held on Friday, May 20, 2022 in House Committee Room 5 at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The chairman, Judge C. Wendell Manning, called the meeting to order at 2:08 p.m.

#### II. ROLL CALL

The secretary called the roll and the following was noted:

##### MEMBERS PRESENT

Judge C. Wendell Manning, Chairman

Megan Bella

Clarence "CC" Copeland

Dr. Belinda Davis

Barry Erwin

Rep. Barbara Reich Freiberg

Rep. Barry Ivey

Polly Johnson

Lauren Russell Ladner

Dr. Keith Leger

Shelbie Newman

Dr. Steven Procopio

Jill Roshto

Jamie Staub

Chief Justice John L. Weimer

MEMBERS ABSENT

Sen. Beth Mizell, Vice Chairperson  
Claston Bernard  
Fredell Butler  
Peggy Cotogno  
McHugh David  
Michael Ince  
Terry Landry  
Joel Watson  
Jackson Wright

STAFF PRESENT

Megan Bella, Senate Staff and LYAC Coordinator  
Candace Shields, Senior Secretary

**III. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

Judge Manning stated that there were new members present. He requested that members introduce themselves and to state their representative capacity. Accordingly, the members introduced themselves.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Dr. Davis made a motion to approve the minutes of November 12, 2021. There being no objection, the minutes were approved.

**V. BUSINESS**

**Approve the recommendations of the Application Review Committee for the new 2022-2023 membership on the Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC)**

Ms. Bella read the recommendations from the review commission for the 2022-2023 Legislative Youth Advisory Council as:

**Congressional District 1**

Sarah Heebe	Metairie Park Country Day School
Vaishnavi Kumbala	Haynes Academy for Advanced Studies
Brooke Richards	Mandeville High School

**Congressional District 2**

Diana Diaz	St. James High School
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Cali Jane Luetkemeier Christina You	Academy of the Sacred Heart Benjamin Franklin High School
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**Congressional District 3**

Sidha Kunada Scarlett Osborn Israel Netters	Lafayette High School Episcopal School of Acadiana Southside High School
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**Congressional District 4**

Andrew Minagar Jewel Bird Faith Courville	Caddo Parish Magnet High School Parkway High School Rice Field Christian Academy (Homeschool)
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**Congressional District 5**

Clayton Baden Rylee Beaudion Lauryn Smith	Buckeye High School Alexandria Senior High School Varnado High School
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**Congressional District 6**

Samuel Adjei Holly Phan Daniel Price	University Laboratory School Baton Rouge Magnet High School McKinley Senior High School
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**At-Large Members**

Calvin Alexander Ananya Bhatia Elliott Gomes Sabrina Huynh Jasmin Kumar Isabella Lancaster William Li Isabella Mantilla Alexander Minagar Shashank Nanjundiah Colden Russell James Stratton Lauren Wiltz	Caddo Parish Magnet High School Caddo Parish Magnet High School Benjamin Franklin High School Caddo Parish Magnet High School Benjamin Franklin High School Mount Carmel Academy Caddo Parish Magnet High School Academy of the Sacred Heart Caddo Parish Magnet High School Baton Rouge Magnet High School Caldwell Parish High School C.E. Byrd High School Academy Of The Sacred Heart
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Ms. Staub made a motion to approve the recommendations of the Application Review Committee for the new 2022-2023 membership on the Legislative Youth Advisory Council. There being no objection, the recommendations were approved.

**WITNESSES PRESENT:**

**Information Only:**

Megan Bella, LYAC, Baton Rouge, LA

**VI. UPDATES**

**A. Report on Legislators Back to School Program planning and preparation by Lauren Ladner, Legislative Communications Office**

Ms. Ladner stated seven representatives and three senators participated, but there were more schools visiting the Capitol where they interacted with the legislators. She said a link was added to the Legislative Communications Office website where teachers and students can request a visit to their school.

**B. Report of LYAC activities by the 2021-2022 members**

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Alexis Ellis, representing the Louisiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC).

Miss Ellis stated she is from District 6. She said the goal of LYAC is to bring a youth related topic to the legislature. She said this year's council had a resolution and a bill. She stated LYAC worked with Senator Lambert and Keep Louisiana Beautiful to sponsor Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 20 to promote "Love the Boot Week" and encourage litter and beautification projects across the state. She said LYAC partnered with Representative Hughes to file House Bill 920 (HB 920). She stated LYAC worked with stakeholder groups such as the Louisiana School Boards Association and the Louisiana Association of Educators to hear concerns and work on language for amendments.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Isa Lancaster, representing the Louisiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Miss Lancaster stated she is from District 1. She said the main objective of LYAC was to work collectively on a legislative bill. She said LYAC formed four committees. She stated the Environment Committee created a Hurricane Preparedness Plan and partnered with FEMA. She said the Education Committee worked on a Voter's Information PSA to increase 17-18 year old youth voter registration in Louisiana.

Miss Ellis stated the Mental Health Committee discussed ideas regarding conversion therapy. She said the Criminal Justice Committee vetted ideas for a "Know Your Rights" campaign regarding First Amendment rights, Miranda rights, and pre-trial diversion for juveniles. She

stated after vetting these ideas amongst the committees, LYAC formed HB 920. She said the bill has four parts. She stated the first part was relative to community service for discipline and the second part defines willful disobedience.

Miss Lancaster stated the third part of the bill allows students to make up work when suspended with the resources they need within a reasonable time. She said the fourth part provides for no out of school suspensions for grades three and below except for habitually disruptive behavior, threats, weapons, and violence. She stated when the bill by the House Education Committee, the bill received a tie vote of 5-5 and was not able to move on to the full House Floor. She said LYAC also launched a survey this year to target Louisiana's youth which are the least surveyed population groups. She stated LYAC believes that the interest, views, and political beliefs that was collected could be valuable information for legislators and future councils to determine which legislation they want to target so the council will create a report.

**WITNESSES PRESENT:**

Information Only:

Alexis Ellis, LYAC, Saint Rose, LA

Isa Lancaster, LYAC, Metairie, LA

**C. Report on May 1 Law Day presentations and activities by The Honorable John L. Weimer, Chief Justice, Louisiana Supreme Court, and The Honorable Randall L. Bethancourt, Judge, 32<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District Court**

Chief Justice Weimer provided handout folders to the commission members entitled "State of Louisiana Supreme Court" which contained reading material relative to "Judges in the Classroom - Students in the Courtroom". A copy was made a part of the public record.

Chief Justice Weimer stated he spoke before the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education a few months ago regarding what the judiciary has implemented. He said that he, Judge Manning, and Judge Bethancourt are on a task force referred to as "Judges in the Classroom and Students in the Courtroom". He stated the task force believes it is important for judges to get out into the community because they would have an opportunity to teach young people about personal responsibility, the consequences for inappropriate behavior, the importance of avoiding making mistakes at a young age that could have life-long impacts, and about civics. He said the task force focused on two time periods within the year to get judges out into the communities: Constitution Week in the fall and Law Day in the month of May. He stated last year, over 10,000 students visited with judges in the courtrooms and some judges visited classrooms virtually.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was The Honorable Randall L. Bethancourt, Judge, 32<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District Court, representing the Judges in the Classroom/ Students in the Courtroom.

Judge Bethancourt stated Law Day is typically set for May 1<sup>st</sup>, but it is actually a month long nation-wide program. He said the American Bar Association sets the theme and this year's theme is "A More Perfect Union - The Constitution in Times of Change". He stated lawyers and judges go to the classrooms, and sometimes the students go into the courtrooms, for the Law Day program. He said in September, judges go into the classrooms for Constitution Day, or students go into the courtrooms, to talk about the Constitution. He stated the Law Day program supplements what teachers teach in the classroom and the students see how civics is applied in the real world. He said over the last two years, more judges are participating who did not participate before. He stated hundreds of judges now participate and impact thousands of students every year through the various programs.

**WITNESSES PRESENT:**

Information Only:

Judge Randall L. Bethancourt, Judges in the Classroom, 32<sup>nd</sup> JDC, Houma, LA

**D. Report on finalized 2022 K-12 Louisiana Student Standards for Social Studies by Sharon Necaise, Deputy Secretary Assistant of Academic Content, Louisiana Department of Education**

Testifying and providing information to the committee was Sharon Necaise, representing the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE).

Ms. Necaise provided a handout to the commission entitled "2022 K-12 Louisiana Student Standards for Social Studies: Civic Education". A copy was made a part of the public record.

Ms. Necaise presented a PowerPoint entitled "Louisiana Commission on Civic Education: 2022 Louisiana Student Standards for Social Studies Update". A copy was made a part of the public record.

Ms. Necaise stated the Social Studies standards process began December 2020 and the BESE Steering Committee has met three times in 2021. She said the steering committee approved a foundation draft of the standards on September 25, 2021. She stated in October 2021, BESE directed the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) to review and take into consideration the public comments that were gathering through the online forum and then refine the set of foundational standards to present to BESE. She said BESE requested that the department extend the public comment period from October through November 2021. She stated in December

2021, the department presented a summary of public comments to BESE who passed a motion instructing the department to review the public comments and refine the standards. She said multiple teams across LDOE refined the standards and opened it up for public comment again in February 2022. She stated on March 9, 2022, LDOE presented to BESE the defined set of standards and the standards were unanimously approved. She said the standards will help the students have a deep understanding and appreciation of the civic principles that underlies the system of government. She stated civics and civics education standards will spiral up year to year starting with kindergarten. She said the kindergarten students will learn the importance of rules and laws, and how people work together. She stated in first grade, the students will learn about local and state government. She said in second grade, the students will learn the principles of American democracy. She stated the civic education standards continue to spiral up grade level upon grade level through high school where there will be a stand alone civics course. She said the one-pager handout provides examples of the standards and how they progress across grade levels. She stated in regard to implementation of the standards, 2022-2023 will be a learning year by engaging with teachers and educators to build knowledge around the standards and the final administration of the LEAP assessments will be aligned with the 2021 standards. She stated 2023-2024 will be implementation of the new standards and a field test for the new LEAP assessments for social studies which will be aligned to the new standards. She said 2024-2025 will be the second implementation year for the standards and the field tests for new LEAP assessments will be operational and aligned with the 2022 standards.

Mr. Erwin asked if there will be a text book or additional materials available to teachers regarding Louisiana history.

Ms. Necaise stated the department has been in touch with vendors who are interested in creating an integrated product just for Louisiana. She said the department's content specialists have been active in pursuing Louisiana specific resources at all grade levels. She stated the department has been working with Louisiana Endowment for Humanities to obtain authentic sources, both primary and secondary, around Louisiana history content and the department will engage teacher leader advisors to create rich tasks in an instructional framework.

Judge Manning stated through the work of this commission, the civics instructional credit was moved from a half hour credit to a full hour credit.

**WITNESSES PRESENT:**

Information Only:

Samantha Chaisson, LDOE, Baton Rouge, LA

Sharon Necaise, LDOE, Baton Rouge, LA

**E. Report on Adult Civic Education (ACE) training by Chief Justice Weimer and Judge Bethancourt**

Testifying and providing information to the commission was The Honorable Randall L. Bethancourt, Judge, 32<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District Court, representing the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education (LCLCE).

Judge Bethancourt stated in the handout folder that Chief Justice Weimer provided, there are news letters from the Supreme Court. He said every judge in Louisiana receives the news letters once a month so the judges have no reason not to be aware of the Judges in the Classroom/ Students in the Courtroom program.

Judge Bethancourt stated the largest conference of lawyers and judges occurs every year in June which provides continuing legal education. He said the LCLCE felt the need to teach judges and lawyers how to go into the classroom. He stated last year, Chief Justice Weimer and Justice Crichton gave a presentation at the conference. He said it was such a success that LCLCE was asked to do a presentation again this summer. He stated a few years ago, the LCLCE discovered there was a need for adult civic education. He said Judge Manning, the previous LCLCE president, discovered that Florida had a program to train lawyers and judges to go into communities to teach civics to adults. He stated LCLCE adopted Florida's program and inserted Louisiana laws. He said the program is called ACE - Adult Civic Education program – and it has been implemented for the last five or six years. He stated LCLCE developed class plans, slides, and handouts in booklet form and online for judges or lawyers who would like to teach a civics group.

Rep. Freiberg asked if the general public could access the teaching materials and asked how they could access the materials.

Judge Bethancourt stated they can find the materials on the LCLCE website.

Judge Manning stated there is also a LCLCE cross link on the Louisiana Supreme Court website.

Chief Justice Weimer stated LCLCE will be meeting with the school superintendents during the summer to bring the programs to them and discuss how LCLCE can help them with what is most important to them.

**WITNESSES PRESENT:**

Information Only:

Judge Randall L. Bethancourt, Judges in the Classroom, 32<sup>nd</sup> JDC, Houma, LA



**F. Report on the upcoming Justice Kimball Summer Institute for Teacher Training by Chief Justice Weimer and Judge Bethancourt**

Chief Justice Weimer stated because of Louisiana State Bar Association funding provided to the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education (LCLCE), teachers can be brought in from around Louisiana to teach the teachers about teaching civics. He said teachers may return for a refresher course. He stated room and board is provided. He said during the course of the program, a student and teacher are honored. He stated the information is posted on the Louisiana Supreme Court website. He invited the commission to meet at the Louisiana Supreme Court building in New Orleans.

Judge Bethancourt stated Chief Justice Weimer teaches one of the courses as well as several other judges who take the time to go to at least one day of the three-day training program.

Ms. Staub stated she will be presenting Project Citizen at the Justice Kimball Summer Institute. She said the Justice Kimball Summer Institute occurs after the Southern Institute paid a federal grant for Project Citizen. She stated teachers of Grades 5-12 Social Studies may apply to go to Chattanooga, Tennessee from July 10<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup>, all expenses paid plus a stipend, to train in Project Citizen. She stated the application is due June 15<sup>th</sup> and if anyone knows of any Grades 5-12 teachers who would enjoy learning about Project Citizen to contact her.

Chief Justice Weimer stated that Ms. Staub can reach out to Peggy Cotogno who has a list of teachers.

Rep. Freiberg asked how the teachers are selected and how many are selected each year.

Judge Manning stated there is a link at the Supreme Court website for various programs, including the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education, which is where the application is found. He said Peggy Cotogno through the Louisiana Council for the Social Studies, which is a consortium of teachers, has been her source for many years for applicants. He stated Ms. Cotogno keeps the count below thirty-five.

**WITNESSES PRESENT:**

Information Only:

Judge Randall L. Bethancourt, Judges in the Classroom, 32<sup>nd</sup> JDC, Houma, LA

**G. Report on 2022 LPB Young Heroes Day by Clarence "C.C." Copeland, Louisiana Public Broadcasting (LPB)**

Mr. Copeland provided photograph copies to the commission members. Copies were made a part of the public record.

Mr. Copeland stated he is a member of the commission and the executive director at Louisiana Public Broadcasting (LPB). He said since 1995, LPB has honored young heroes who are students across the state that are honored and recognized for their academic success, work in their community, and for their inspiration to others. He stated for the first time in two years since the COVID lockdown, LPB has honored in person this year seven Young Heroes. He said the program is twenty-seven years old. He presented photographs of the seven Young Heroes participating in various activities to the members. He stated LPB also presented a MacBook Pro computer to the Young Heroes.

#### **VII. CONSIDERATION OF ANY OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION**

There were no other matters that came before the commission.

#### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the commission, Mr. Erwin moved to adjourn. Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 3:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Judge C. Wendell Manning  
Chairman

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Approval Date