

LOUISIANA COMMISSION ON CIVIC EDUCATION

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Louisiana Commission on Civic Education

APPROVED MINUTES

November 15, 2019

I. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education was held on Friday, November 15, 2019 in the John J. Hainkel Jr. Room at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The chairman, Judge Manning, called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m.

Judge Manning: I welcome you to this meeting of the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education. I thank our commission members for being present. I thank the representatives of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council for being present and their sponsors. I also want to thank the members of the public. We have some guest presenters who will be called upon and introduced with more specifics later in the program. We welcome those in the general public who may be watching the proceedings through live streaming. I want to thank our Capital staff – legislative staff – for all of their assistance, the security as well as the IT people for pulling our meeting together. I particularly want to thank Tammy and Candace for the most excellent job they do trying to corral and pull us together each year for a couple of these meetings. Thank you, ladies, for pulling together meeting materials and doing such a wonderful job on the draft of the Annual Report which we will be called upon to review and hopefully take action on later in the meeting. With that being said, I'll invite Candace to call the roll.

II. ROLL CALL

The secretary called the roll and the following was noted:

MEMBERS PRESENT

Judge C. Wendell Manning, Chairman

Shan Davis, Vice Chairperson

Wanjennia Atkins (on behalf of Monica Taylor)

Melissa Cloutet (on behalf of Robert Travis Scott)
Rep. Gary Carter
Beth Courtney
Peggy Cotogno
Barry Erwin
Ryan Gremillion
Lawrence J. Narcisse
Morgan Robertson
Lauren Russell
Kenny Shutt (on behalf of Will Chapman)
Jamie Staub (on behalf of John Alexander)
Kyle Wedberg
Jackson Wright (on behalf of Donald Songy)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Fredell Butler
Sen. Yvonne Colomb
Rep. Patrick Jefferson
Polly Johnson
Terry Landry
Josh McNemar
Dr. Lindsey Moore (on behalf of Doris Hicks)
Kelly Pepper
Cheryl Serrett (on behalf of Sen. Blade Morrish)
Anita Sexton

STAFF PRESENT

Tammy Crain-Waldrop, Legislative Researcher
Candace Shields, Senior Secretary

III. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Judge Manning: I'd like to recognize our two newest members of the commission. Jamie Staub, who is replacing John Alexander with Project Citizen. Jamie, welcome. Also, we have Representative Gary Carter who as vice chair will be replacing Representative Nancy Landry with the House Education Committee. So, Representative Carter, thank you for being with us today. Please join me in welcoming them. Since we only meet two or three times a year, I thought it would be good to –, for the benefit of our new members and our guests, if we would begin by briefly again introducing ourselves, telling what our role, our particular representation is, what group we represent here on the commission. I'm Judge Wendell Manning, representing

the Louisiana District Judges Association and we will continue with Peggy down at the end and work our way around.

Ms. Cotogno: (Inaudible)..

Mr. Wright: (Inaudible).

Ms. Cloutet: (Inaudible).

Ms. Staub: Jamie Staub, Project Citizen.

Mr. Shutt: Kenny Shutt and I'm filling in for, uh, Will Chapman, the executive director with the Louisiana Press Association. We're the trade association for the Louisiana news media industry.

Mr. Erwin: I'm Barry Erwin, president of, uh, Council for a Better Louisiana.

Ms. Davis: Shan Davis, executive director for the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Ms. Courtney: I'm Beth Courtney, president of Louisiana Public Broadcasting.

Rep. Carter: I'm Gary Carter. I represent District 102 and the acting chair of the House Education Committee.

Mr. Gremillion: I'm Ryan Gremillion, the policy director of the Louisiana Department of Education.

Mr. Wedberg: I'm Kyle Wedberg. I serve as the president and CEO of NOCCA – performing and visual arts highschool for the state of Louisiana, but I am currently the chair of the Volunteer Louisiana Commission and a proud AmeriCorps alum.

Ms. Atkins: Hello. Wanjenna Atkins, representing the Attorney General's Office.

Mr. Narcisse: Lawrence Narcisse, representing the League of Women Voters.

Judge Manning: We have two commission members in the audience who will be presenting a little later, but if you would like to come forward for just a moment and introduce yourselves.

Ms. Russell: Hello. I'm Lauren Russell. I work in the House Communications Office and I work with the Back to School Program with legislators.

Ms. Robertson: Hello. Morgan Robertson, the communication director here at the Senate and I'm the Back to School coordinator for us.

Judge Manning: Again, I welcome everyone. As I mentioned, we meet two to three times a year and it's custom at our November meeting that we are called upon to review and approve an annual report to the governor and the legislature. It is good to take this as an opportunity to reflect upon our role, scope and mission if you will. What is the purpose of the commission on Civic Education? Taking a cue from our excellent past chair, Ms. Beth Courtney, I wanted to share with you the chair's message that will accompany the annual report for our consideration. The members of the Louisiana on Civic Education share a great commitment to educating all our citizens on the important principals that form the foundation of a representative democracy. The members are continually working to identify civic education projects throughout our state and to promote public awareness of those projects. The contributions to this annual report from representatives of various member organizations show a vast and rich offering of civic education opportunities for our citizens. We have begun work to create a statewide, web based, civic education event calendar to increase public awareness of these opportunities. This internet calendar is an important component to the development of the commission's database of civic education resources as we strive to fulfill the legislative mandate of serving as a clearinghouse for public information on civic education. The commission is building upon our network of civic education professionals and strengthening these partnerships. At each commission meeting, we are briefed by our member/partner agencies about current activities around this shared mission. In addition to adult civic education outreach, the commission has placed priority upon efforts to educate the youth of our state on the importance of citizen involvement in our government. At commission meetings, we are updated on current youth civic education and engagement activities, including the "Legislators Back to School" programs. Strong support and oversight is provided by the –, to the Louisiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council. The council is a group of thirty-one outstanding young people selected from across the state through a process that recognizes their commitment to and enthusiasm for our representative democracy and the legislative process. We have several of those representatives here and we will be hearing from them shortly. Council members caucus together and become a voice for youth issues in the legislative arena. Members provide updates at each commission meeting. They have testified at the Capitol on pending legislation, and they have returned to their schools and communities as advocates for citizen participation. The council's work has continued to be highlighted through its member's involvement in Louisiana Public Broadcasting's series Louisiana Public Square. Their thoughtful and informed comments have impressed decision makers and the public in general. Commission members understand that for our state to flourish and succeed, our citizens, young and old alike, must possess knowledge and understanding of the principals of representative democracy. With this knowledge, however, citizens must also share a commitment to civil discourse and civic engagement. It is my pleasure to serve as chairman with

these committed members as we strive to achieve the goals of the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education and we are thankful for the opportunity to, to further this important work.

Judge Manning: Now continuing on with our focus, may I direct your attention to page nine of the draft of the annual report. Page nine of the draft of the annual report. For the members of the commission that may already be familiar with the enacting legislation which created it in 2004 – the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education. For those who may be watching at home or those in the audience, I just wanted to highlight the statutory purposes as found in Title 24, Chapter 19, La. R.S. §971. The purposes of the commission shall include the following: to educate citizens in the community as well as students and schools on the importance of citizen involvement in a representative democracy; and to promote communication and collaboration among organizations in the state that conduct civic education programs. Our statutory authority, our powers and functions are found in §973. It identifies seven functions and you may find those in the report which we will hopefully approve later in our meeting. But, I want to say again thanks to the member organizations who send representatives to participate in the work of this commission – this vital work. They do a wonderful job throughout this state in promoting the role, the scope, the mission of the Commission on Civic Education. And with that, we will continue with our agenda and thank you for indulging me, ladies and gentlemen, to highlight this, uh, important work.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Judge Manning: Well, now, uh, the chair will entertain a motion –, you've been presented a draft of the minutes from our meeting of the –, May 17, 2019. There's, uh, Mr. Narcisse, you were present. You came in and I wanted to make sure we had a motion to amend those prepared minutes to reflect your presence at that meeting. The chair would entertain a motion to amend those minutes.

Ms. Courtney: I so move.

Judge Manning: Thank you, Ms. Courtney. Is there a second?

Ms. Davis: Second.

Judge Manning: It's been seconded by Ms. Davis. Any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor say aye.

Commission Members: Aye.

Judge Manning: Any opposed, no? Any abstentions? The motion carries.

Ms. Courtney made a motion to amend the unapproved minutes of May 17, 2019 to add Lawrence J. Narcisse as present. There being no objection, the amendment was approved.

Judge Manning: That being amended now, the chair will entertain a motion to approve the minutes as amended.

Ms. Courtney: I so move.

Judge Manning: Properly moved by Ms. Courtney.

Mr. Erwin: I second.

Judge Manning: Seconded by, by Mr. Erwin. Any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor say aye.

Commission Members: Aye.

Judge Manning: Any opposed though? Any abstention? The minutes are herein approved.

Ms. Courtney made a motion to approve the minutes of May 17, 2019 as amended. There being no objection, the minutes were approved as amended.

V. APPROVAL OF ANNUAL REPORT

Judge Manning: Continuing with our agenda then. We have before you the draft of the Annual Report. Tammy and Candace, I want to thank you again for, uh, soliciting information from our members and compiling that information and doing such a wonderful job in presenting it in the format that you have for us today. So, uh, the members, if you need some additional time to review the draft. At the appropriate time, after you have had this additional time to review the draft, I will entertain a motion to—, that it be approved. This is the Annual Report to be submitted to the governor and the legislature.

Ms. Courtney: Mr. Chairman, could I ask a question? Did you get sufficient information from all of the members? Do you think?

Judge Manning: We did. Ah, we, uh, invited every one of the participating organizations to submit a brief report and, uh, we have, a report from the vast majority of all of our organizations represented on the commission.

Ms. Courtney: Well, unless there's an objection, I, I would move that we adopt the report.

Judge Manning: Thank you, Ms. Courtney. Is there a second?

Mr. Erwin: Second.

Judge Manning: A second by Mr. Erwin. Any discussion? Any further questions or comments? Hearing none, all in favor say aye.

Commission Members: Aye.

Judge Manning: Any opposed, no? Any abstentions? The report is approved.

Ms. Courtney made a motion to approve the 2018-2019 Annual Report. There being no objection, the Annual Report was approved.

Judge Manning: Thank you again.

VI. UPDATES

Judge Manning: Continuing now with updates. You may recall at the May meeting, uh, we appointed and asked for volunteers for a work group. A work group to try to study how to develop and implement this web-based calendar. Uh, in one of our functions under the statute, we're called upon to, uh, develop a data base including a civic education events calendar. So this was sort of the first step in trying to move towards that. With that being said, I'd invite Ms. Peggy Cotogno to give an update on the work of the work group.

A. Civic Education Events Calendar: Peggy Cotogno

Ms. Cotogno: Thank you. Uh, we're looking to create a civics education events calendar. Um, Beth Courtney, Shay Davis and I have agreed to try to put something together, work out the kinks and to eventually have something that is really good for the public to have access to. Uh, so far, we've had two meetings and, uh, working hard on it. Uh, we've reviewed the statute and, uh, worked a bit on the appropriate disclaimers that should be put on that calendar. Uh, we've been talking about, uh, to begin the calendar with youth-oriented programs, but that's just to begin with – little steps – because we may want to broaden that. But for right now, uh, the group is, is spearheading youth-oriented programs to be put on this program. We might want to discuss that a little bit. But, uh, uh, further more, we are, uh, we are working to begin with, with events that we don't have to update too much. Uh, we would like, uh, towards this end, we would like for each member of the commission to explore submitting a submission of what they would like to have posted on the calendar. And, uh, the idea is that the committee would review all of the, uh, submissions and that would be the beginning of the calendar. Uh, of course, I don't have to

mention that, uh, that it has to be non-partisan event. It has to be an event that is open to the public, uh, and it cannot be a fund raiser of any sort. And, uh, I'm missing something. Beth, what was the other thing?

Ms. Courtney: Statewide.

Ms. Cotogno: Statewide. It needs to be statewide. And I thought would I might do is, uh, put together, uh, just an e-mail with, with everybody's e-mail on it – and I'll give you some time to think about it – but then I'll send it out to you and if you have any recommendations and suggestions you can just send them back to me. And before our next meeting, we will review them and, uh, you know, continue with it. We're, we haven't decided yet who's going to –, which website we're going to work off of. We've talked about my website – the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education, the Senate's website IPO and we're still working on that. We need to find which one would be the best fit. I think that's pretty much it. Ladies, have I missed anything? We're real excited about it. I think it's going to be great.

Judge Manning: Well, I want to thank, uh, Ms. Courtney and Ms. Davis, Ms. Cotogno for working hard and, uh, devoting some time toward this topic. If any of you have any questions at this time, the chair will entertain any questions you may want to pose to the work group. If you have any thoughts or suggestions or if you would like to volunteer to help on this work group, I'm sure they would welcome your participation. But please, reach out to these ladies. Thank you. Thank you for your report.

B. Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC): Megan Bella

Judge Manning: We'll move now to the Legislative Youth Advisory Council. Would the members please come forward? And, Ms. Bella, thank you for your direction and your leadership and guidance for this group.

Ms. Bella: I'm Megan Bella. I'm the LYAC coordinator and Senate staff. And some of our current members are here today so I'm going to let them –, to give the update and then we're happy to answer any questions you guys have for us.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Andrew Gary, representing Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Hello, members. My name is Andrew Gary. I go to St. Martin's Episcopal School in New Orleans. Uh, this is my second term on LYAC. I'm going to discuss Senate Bill 43 which was the piece of legislation that LYAC got passed during the last session. The –, Senate Bill 43 actually started about a year ago today at the November meeting of the Commission on Civic

Education when we met with Donald Songy with Governor's Office to start working on the idea. Over the next few months, we met with Representative Ivey, Representative Stokes, Senator Appel, and at least a dozen other individuals from GOHSEP, all the way to the Louisiana School Boards Association to figure out what will be the best version of this bill. In May, we spoke before the House and Senate Education Committees on the bill where it passed unanimously. And in June, the governor signed it into law. Uh, we contin—, the Education Committee of LYAC plans to continue to work on school safety this year and hopes to make sure that every school in Louisiana is as safe as possible. Thank you, members.

Judge Manning: Congratulations on the hard work and the success in getting that through the legislative process. Wonderful. Uh, any questions or comments on this particular point? It's located on page seventy-six of the Annual Report. What did you find to be the most difficult part of the process in getting the legislation through?

Mr. Gary: I, I would say the most difficult part were —, was the, the two weeks before when we had to make a few last minute changes to the bill to make sure that there wouldn't be any problems with its implementation. That was definitely the most challenging part.

Judge Manning: Other questions? Representative Carter?

Rep. Carter: Thank you for your service, uh, and thank you for doing this. What —, uh, so you started this concept of drafting legislation and you're working it through the process?

Mr. Gary: About a year ago today, I think.

Rep. Carter: That's pretty fascinating. Uh, and, and what grade were you in when you started this process?

Mr. Gary: I would have been a junior.

Rep. Carter: A junior in high school.

Mr. Gary: Yes.

Rep. Carter: How, how many other, uh, students collaborated on this?

Mr. Gary: Um, let's see. There's seven of us on the Education Committee for the first few months and then when, uh, we decided to make it the council's bill for the year then about —, the, the remaining twenty-seven members started helping out too.

Rep. Carter: Let me ask you. Did you work the committees? The Education Committees?

Mr. Gary: I personally didn't. I can't speak to what, uh, Donald Songy or the other representatives and senators did, but –.

Rep. Carter: But you, you met individually with, with representatives and senators to get the legislation going?

Mr. Gary: Yes, we did.

Rep. Carter: Uh, you answered their questions and you made revisions to your legislation as a result of those conversations, right?

Mr. Gary: Yes, we did.

Rep. Carter: That's what we call working the committee. That's good work. Uh, you know, that's hard work. Not too many people could say they've changed laws and created laws, and for you to have done so in high school –. What city are you from again?

Mr. Gary: New Orleans.

Rep. Carter: Of course. Thank you.

Judge Manning: Mr. Wedberg, you had a question or comment?

Rep. Carter: Oh wait. I do want to point out I'm co-author of this legislation. I, this, my, I have a big smudge in the middle of my glasses. I'm reading like this. But, uh, yes, thank you. Thank you for your good work.

Mr. Wedberg: (Inaudible) the committee working. Yeah. Uh, have you talked to any students? Have you yourself or have you talked to any students that have been asked for their opinions on school safety based on the bill?

Mr. Gary: I think there's actually one member of LYAC who was asked by their school to fulfill the requirements of SB 43. I know, I mean, see I go to a private school, but we, we do follow something similar to it. I'm on my high school Safety and Security Committee as an active member.

Mr. Wedberg: Very good.

Judge Manning: Other questions, comments from members of the commission?

Rep. Carter: If you think of any good bills for next year –. I'm going over my list, you know, and I'm not limited to five so please–. Thank you.

Mr. Gary: I, I will keep that in mind, Representative.

Judge Manning: Would any of the other members like to speak to us and give us an update?

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Bridget Seghers, representing Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Miss Seghers: Yes, sir. Hi, I'm Bridget Seghers. I go to Covington High School and I'm a senior this year. I represent the First Congressional District on LYAC and I'm going to be speaking about our two-day seminar. It was held July 22nd to the 23rd. That was our initial meeting so that's how we kicked off our year. Um, it was held right here at the Capitol. So our first day, we jumped right into electing our officers being followed by a presentation from the Louisiana Municipal Association. They were very welcoming. We got to ask a lot of questions on lobbying and municipalities. Um, we were –, followed by that with, uh, visits by Senator Ryan Gatti and Senator Troy Carter. They were very eager to talk to us. Shared their –, uh, shared –.

Mr. Gary: Experience.

Miss Seghers: Yeah, the association experience and knowledge –, on us. Uh, Senator Gatti talked to us about his, uh, process to be elected and his, uh, work passing bills, um, with bi-partisan teamwork. And Senator Troy Carter was very happy to discuss some of his bills in the works. Uh, the following day, we were visited by Representative Polly Thomas. We got to talk with her mainly about education and get her opinions on, uh, how we can create a more complete curriculum. Um, and I know we definitely talked a lot about, uh, should we test things or should we go more knowledge based, um, in our education. She was so helpful and so welcoming. Um, next we were visited by, uh, Kevin Gautreaux. He is a producer on Louisiana Public Square. He encouraged us to, uh, definitely appear on the show and tried to make us, uh, very, uh, excited about that opportunity that is given to us through LYAC. Um, afterwards, we were visited by the Legislators Back to School Program, the Attorney General's Office and Crime Stoppers to round out our meeting. It was a great way to start the year.

Judge Manning: Wonderful. Any questions or comments about this particular portion of their report? Had you made it to Public Square yet?

Miss Seghers: Uh, I appear next week. I'm very excited.

Judge Manning: Alright. Wish you the best.

Miss Seghers: Thank you.

Judge Manning: We'll be watching. Ms. Courtney, what, what day will that be?

Ms. Courtney: Uh, we're taping on the 20th.

Miss Seghers: Yes, ma'am. I'll be there.

Ms. Courtney: Good, good.

Judge Manning: All right.

Ms. Courtney: In fact, Mr. Chairman?

Judge Manning: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Courtney: May I just say that I think the members of LYAC add so much to the conversation. Ah, we, we, uh, it's a wonderful opportunity for us to have these very smart young people, uh, be involved in the process and I think they, you know, do a terrific job. I'm, I'm very impressed with them and I, I made this pledge to Megan that perhaps we're going to try to move it around the state a little bit more. We were up in Alexandria doing it. We're going to try to do that as well. So, uh, it's a wonderful thing and I'm always impressed by the good questions and, uh, uh, all the work that they do with that. We thank you very much.

Miss Seghers: Thank you so much for having us.

Judge Manning: And we have another person to speak to us?

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Sophie Faircloth, representing Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Miss Faircloth: Yes, sir. Hi. My name is Sophie Faircloth. I go to Denham Springs High School and I'm the communications officer for LYAC. So I'm going to talk to you guys a little bit about committees and about our World Peace Day. So at our first meeting outside of our July summit, we took suggestions and voted on four main subjects to cover with our committees this year and we decided on civic engagement, health, environment and education. So the Education Committee is taking this opportunity, like Andrew said, to expand on a successful year's worth of education legislation. The Youth Health Committee has turned its focus on the mental health of

students by analyzing anxiety, depression, suicide rates and is also to—, taking to looking further into school safety building on the legislation like Senate Bill 43. The Environmental Committee is currently looking further into exploring solutions to issues pertaining to sugar cane and oysters. I know that's a weird combination, but I'm sure they'll bring it all together. And our Civic Engagement Committee has been working on creating a website and social media forums dedicated to motivating students to become more involved at the legislative systems in their area and within Louisiana. And as far as World Peace Day goes, we had a lot of submissions for artwork and we listened to a lot of speeches, including from our own president, uh, with the theme of "Peace Begins with You and Me". And we had a really, really good turn-out this year.

Judge Manning: Wonderful. Any questions or comments about this particular portion of the presentation by the commission? Alright. Well, thank you again for your hard work and your dedication. And we—, yes. Just, uh.

Ms. Cotogno: I did want to thank Megan. Um, she, uh, last month, was it? The Louisiana Council for Social Studies had their annual meeting and, uh, she brought one of the LYAC students – William Bartle. Okay. And he actually was the hit of the assembly, you know. So because he got up and spoke about LYAC and he was wonderful. As I know all of you would have been too. So he was talking to the teachers about the program and, uh, you know, Megan traveled up the day before and served, you know, as the chaperone and everything. Thank you so much. It meant a lot to the teachers. Thank you.

Judge Manning: And thank you, Ms. Bella, for your hard work and your sponsorship. And then we have also another member from LYAC who is here to give us an update.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Molly McNulty, representing Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Miss McNulty: Okay. My name is Molly McNulty. I'm a junior from C. E. Byrd High School in Shreveport, Louisiana and I'm also the secretary of LYAC representing Congressional District 4. And I'm going to talk about the application process and how we've kind of vamped that up recently. So applications are open to high school students aged fourteen to nineteen in Louisiana. And the parts of the application consist of a Parental Consent Form, about eight short-answer questions and two letters of recommendation. So every year, three members from each congressional district are selected to serve as part of the council along with at-large members making up a total of thirty-one high school students to form LYAC. And in the past, all of the application parts, all of the forms have been mailed, but now we are working with the House web team to go live with an online form where you type answers directly on the web page and it generates an e-mail. So this will make it easier so applicants don't have to send in paper applications any more and then we can just electronically send the forms to the people scoring

them. Um, it will be ready to go in December just in time for the next application period that opens on, I believe, January.

Judge Manning: Wonderful.

Miss McNulty: Oh, that should be cool.

Judge Manning: Thank you for those improvements that are in the process and for your hard work in that regard. Any other questions or comments? Representative Carter?

Rep. Carter: I just want to recognize all the –, this –, the representatives from LYAC. You know, I've heard great things about you all, but to see you all in person and all of you all –, and what you all have accomplished –, accomplishing, have accomplished and what you all have accomplished –, accomplishing makes me feel good. You know, to see that there are leaders coming up. So thank you all for the good work. Remain involved. Uh, this is, uh, an amazing level of engagement at your level. So please, remain as committed as you are. Thank you all for your service.

LYAC Representatives: Thank you.

Judge Manning: Ms. Davis?

Ms. Davis: Yes. So I'm very excited to hear about the online application. As one of the graders, uh, for the, for the last few years, it's very welcomed. And, uh, we choose these applicants blindly as you know. But I, I believe there was another change that we're going to be making as far as the grading too in that we will grade a couple of districts. Folks on the commission will not be reading all of the applications. So I'm very thankful about those changes and I'm glad you're working on that. It was my suggestion, uh, that the, the youngsters work on the proposals. So I'm glad.

Unknown Female: (Inaudible.)

Ms. Davis: Yeah, because we had so many. I mean, it takes a lot.

Judge Manning: Great. Mr. Erwin?

Mr. Erwin: Yeah, I just wanted to congratulate you also for the work. And I've had the opportunity to host some of the Public Square programs. (Inaudible) the students there and I think (inaudible) good interaction. I just had a really quick question. I just wonder (inaudible)

all the work do –, done together when you're really spread out all over the state. Do you meet a lot or do you do it all electronically? I'm just curious.

Miss McNulty: We actually all have little group meets for each of our committees like Sophie was talking about. So we all have one big – this is not very formal – we all have one big Snapchat group chat with all of the members.

Mr. Erwin: Ah.

Miss McNulty: And then separate, we all have group meets and I-message group chats with each committee so we can discuss what we're going to do. So at the end of each meeting we have – we've meetings about every other month – we talk about basically what goals we want to have by the start of our next meeting. So by the end of our last meeting, each committee made our little group chats and wanted to know basically what our general ideas and plans were for the year. So by the time they got back for our next meeting, which is tomorrow, we all kind of got that together through group chats.

Mr. Erwin: Wow. And that work's pretty well apparently. That's great.

Judge Manning: Yeah.

Mr. Erwin: Group chats.

Judge Manning: Any other questions or comments? Again, thank you for all of your hard work, your dedication and let's give a round of applause for their wonderful work. Let me ask – will you be able to remain for the next few minutes. We're going to have another interactive program and it would be good if you could school us on some things, I think.

WITNESSES PRESENT:

Information Only:

Sophie Faircloth, LYAC, Denham Springs, LA
Andrew Gary, LYAC, New Orleans, LA
Molly McNulty, LYAC, Shreveport, LA
Bridget Seghers, LYAC, Covington, LA

C. Legislator's Back to School Program: Morgan Robertson

Judge Manning: Moving on with our agenda. We have an update from Morgan Robertson on Legislators Back to School Program.

Ms. Robertson: Uh, good afternoon again, fellow members. Uh, we have the report from the House and the Senate's Back to School Program from last year. It is also included – I'm not sure on which page number – but it's in the Annual Report. Uh, we had seven senators that participated this year. They visited eleven schools between the seven of them. Um, and so far this year, we've had three senators participate.

Ms. Russell: I –, so we've had fifteen, uh, representatives and that's, uh, cumulative across the board.

Judge Manning: Page fifteen, I believe.

Ms. Russell: Okay. Uh, so we are seeing much smaller numbers than we have in past years. Me and Morgan talked about it a little bit. We think, uh, maybe we just need to revamp, um, some of our tactics and figure out, um, how to target maybe, uh, a younger group of representatives coming in and see if there's, you know, different ways that they want to approach their, their Back to School duties.

Ms. Courtney: I'm wondering if –, Mr. Chairman?

Judge Manning: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Courtney: I'm wondering if in the orientation for all of the new legislators coming in, we could make sure that –, that we include something about these wonderful–, these programs?

Ms. Robertson: Yeah, I'm not sure, uh, what the House's orientation program looks like, but I know that Back to School does have a segment and I will be speaking with new members as they're coming through the process. And a lot of times we do have, uh, some enthusiasm from the newer members that are coming in. But like this last year, an election year, um, you know, there –, it's a different kind of year than it is during the rest of the term. So we're hoping with the, you know, the new group that we'll kind of spark some interest doing that.

Ms. Courtney: And if you need any assistance or anything, maybe we can ask questions about that –

Ms. Robertson: Okay.

Ms. Courtney: – when we do news stories.

Ms. Robertson: Okay.

Judge Manning: Good idea. Good idea. Do you have a PowerPoint? Uh, I'm sorry.
Representative Carter.

Rep. Carter: Thank you. And, and listen, I'm a member of the House. I didn't even know about it. Uh, and I do my own Back to School event and I don't know any legislator who doesn't. Especially in the, especially in an election year. We all do. I did one. Representative Lyons did one. Everyone. I don't know a representative who did not do a Back to School thing. I just coordinated with you guys. And I think that's just a lack of communication, but we can quickly solve that. That's easy to resolve.

Ms. Russell: Absolutely.

Rep. Carter: Not only is it online, but we do have orientation coming up. I can make certain we include it in ours, but I honestly didn't know about it. And, like, we did one. Like, of course. Right?

Ms. Russell: And as I've mentioned in meetings long ago that I thought it was just an issue of maybe it not being related to me.

Rep. Carter: Yes. That's what I'm saying. Yeah.

Ms. Russell: Ah, and we've, we've done all kinds of stuff trying to get —. I just think everyone forgets. (Inaudible) about it.

Rep. Carter: We have, we have joint ones. Like I did ones with senators. We had, we had a big massive one in the West Bank of the city of New Orleans. I know they did them out in Opelousas. I can think of over twenty —, tw—, well over half of us who did them where I know we can increase these numbers. So let's work together and see if we can bridge that gap.

Ms. Russell: Absolutely.

Rep. Carter: Thanks.

Judge Manning: Now, Morgan. I, would you help direct us on how to get to the PowerPoint, uh, some access to the —.

Ms. Robertson: Well, I don't have a PowerPoint, but they asked me if I could pull up the Civic Education Commission website.

Judge Manning: Right. Please.

Ms. Robertson: Um, and it's—, yeah, there we go. Okay. So to access the legis—, the Senate, uh, I'm sorry, the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education website, you would first start out, uh, at the legislative homepage which is listed here, legis.la.gov.

Judge Manning: Um, hm.

Ms. Robertson: Uh, moving on. You would go down to this menu that's on the left side of the page to "Related Links" and you can see it right here. It's the second thing listed, um, in that order and click on the picture. Then you have an opportunity to visit the Back to School Program website or the Commission on Civic Education website and you would just click this logo. And, there you go.

Unknown Female Speaker: (Inaudible)

Ms. Robertson: Okay. Oh, and it's actually up here too in this red, uh, menu – the LYAC website.

Judge Manning: Wonderful. Great access to some good information.

Ms. Robertson: Yeah, and it can —, you know, you can see the statute. Um, you can visit the House page. The Senate page. The membership listing is here. So there's some interesting things on this site.

Judge Manning: Wonderful. Ms. Davis?

Ms. Davis: Um, for the Back to School, I guess I would love it if we could partner a BESE member with —, the BESE district representative with the, um, the members of the House and the Senate to accompany them and it would be a great bridge.

Ms. Robertson: Alright.

Judge Manning: Other ques—, other questions or comments?

Ms. Cotogno: I just, I just wanted to say one thing. I think you said, um, that if you just Google civiced.gov, it will come to this? Is that correct?

Ms. Robertson: Well, you can —, you can Google Civic Ed Louisiana and it comes up as the first link.

Ms. Cotogno: Okay. That's the way I like to find (inaudible). Thank you.

Judge Manning: Alright. Any other questions or comments? And just so you'll know too, I want to thank Morgan and Lauren. Morgan is an attorney and the Senate Communications Officer as she had mentioned. She works with the Back to School Program with the Senate members and then Lauren is House Communications Specialist working with the House members in the Back to School Program. So thank you for all your hard work.

Ms. Robertson: Thank you.

Judge Manning: You're welcome.

VII. PRESENTATIONS

Adult Civic Education (ACE): The Honorable Judge Randall L. Bethancourt, President of the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education with Interactive Program: "Could You Pass the Test?" by Judge Wendell Manning and Peggy Cotogno

Judge Manning: Now continuing on with our agenda, we have a special presentation. We are very fortunate to have with us The Honorable Randy Bethancourt who's the judge of the 32nd Judicial District Court, Terrebonne Parish of Houma, Louisiana. He's been on the bench since 2003. Judge Bethancourt serves on the Executive Board of Directors of the Louisiana District Judges Association chairing the Judge's Committee on Civics and Law Related Education. He's also president of the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education. He's going to be speaking to us today about Adult Civic Education. Judge Bethancourt.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was The Honorable Randall L. Bethancourt, representing the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education.

Judge Bethancourt: Thank you, Judge Manning. It's a pleasure being with all of you this afternoon. Before I go any further, I want to say this: I don't see a whole lot of grey-haired people in this room. That's why I'm going to say it. It's a pleasure being in the John Hainkel committee room. Uh, as a young lawyer, I had the pleasure of having cases, uh, involving John Hainkel as my opponent or sometimes on the same side. He was one of those lawyers that you want to emulate and he was an older lawyer – of course, I was a young lawyer – and, you know, he, he treated young lawyers as a – , a true mentor even though we may have been on opposite sides. He was so professional and ethical. Uh, he was one of those lawyers that you go, "Wow". His word was his bond. And, uh, I know that he was, um, Speaker of the House and President of the Senate and died too young. He died what? 2005 or so? And, uh, anyway, it's so good to be in a room dedicated to him so I just wanted to pass that on for those of you who may not, uh, have known John Hainkel. Uh, number two, it's a pleasure being here and to represent the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education. Uh, Ms. Peggy Cotogno does all the work – our

Executive Director – so I want to thank Peggy for everything. Um, I was, uh, selected as President. I probably missed a meeting, but I'm not sure how that happened. But Judge Manning was my predecessor and I have some very big shoes to, to fill. Uh, Judge Manning is very, very progressive. Very hard working judge. And, uh, he had an idea while he was president. You know, we, we noticed that, uh, there's a need to spread civic education throughout the state of Louisiana not only to elementary and high school ch–, uh, students, but there's a big need to educate or perhaps re-educate our adult citizenry. Uh, we as judges, we see citizens on a daily basis, uh, in our courts and I know that I'm amazed – and I think Judge Manning also – as to the little education about civics, ah, the regular citizen remembers from school. And so, Judge Manning had a great idea. Well, how about starting a program to educate adults. So he looked into it and spearheaded a little committee and he discovered that Florida – state of Florida – had an excellent program. They kind of wrote the book literally. So through Judge Manning's leadership, ah, he contacted the, uh, powers that be in Florida and, uh, they partnered with us and we partnered with them. They were fantastic. And so we rewrote their book so to speak using Louisiana laws and, and so forth. So I want to thank Judge Manning for spearheading and being a leader on that program. It just started. Uh, as Ms. Peggy put in my, my, uh, bullet point, it was born two years ago. So, uh, the baby is still very young. Very–, in it's infancy. Uh, we, we've had–, uh, let's see, thirty, uh, twenty-four presentations so far and it's been about two years, not quite two years. However, we've, uh, taught more than five hundred adults in those presentations. And so it's beginning and it's snowballing. There's a need. There's an excitement about it. The, the citizens that take part are very excited about it. And we go to, uh, Lions Clubs, the, uh, rotaries, and any civic group, uh, that, uh, we think could benefit. And it's, and it's not just esoteric, um, hard to understand constitutional, uh, law, it is basic nuts and bolts what we as citizens need to know and, uh, what is an average citizen's duty. What were their duties as citizens. So it's pretty basic. And we have a fun activity for all of you too in your day, I think. Uh, Judge Manning and Ms. Peggy is going to –, they are going to, um, uh, have you do a little homework, a little fun. And, uh, the, the people right behind me, the young, they're going to know all the answers. They are going to get this. So the –, because they –, they're in school and they're so bright. It's, ah, some of the adults –, we kind of forget perhaps some of the things we learned in those civics classes. So, uh, I wanted to mention just one other –, two other things. You know, our LCLCE, um, is a dynamic program. We love it. I'm so excited. We, we touched thousands students every year. We have lawyers. We have judges going throughout the state in schools. They come to our court rooms. Uh, it is a fantastic program. I can tell you from personal experience, the ones that come – the students, the teachers – they love it. They love it. And it's to supplement, it is to support, uh, the text books and what the teachers teach in the class rooms. They see first hand from a judge or an attorney, uh, what really goes on in court and how our system works and they really get it. The, uh, as I've said, the enthusiasm level is fantastic. So it's a pleasure, uh, to, to be president of the LCLCE and to be a part of this wonderful, uh, program so I want to thank you all for that opportunity. Okay, so without further ado, Judge Manning?

Judge Manning: Unless –, are there any questions? Let me invite any questions or comments for Judge Bethancourt? I would like to add – Judge Bethancourt since 2003 taking a bench – he has presented to over 19,000 students across this state. So again we commend you for your leadership and excellent job you have done in reaching our young people.

Judge Bethancourt: My pleasure.

Judge Manning: Thank you.

Judge Bethancourt: Alright.

Judge Manning: At this time then I'm going to invite our vice chair –, oh, I'm sorry. Representative Carter? I apologize.

Rep. Carter: Thanks, Judge. And thank you, Judge, and thank you for the work that you do. I, I am a lawyer and I do have some grey hairs and I do know John Hainkel, III. (Inaudible) on both sides of it and, and I don't know, like the whole legacy of this family, but he is an outstanding lawyer today. Uh, and it's, it's good that he's carrying on the legacy of his, his –, I think that's his grandfather, right?

Judge Bethancourt: I'm not sure.

Rep. Carter: I think it's –, because –, I think he's the grandson if I'm not mistaken.

Judge Bethancourt: Could be the grandson.

Rep. Carter: Yeah. Well, thank –, well thank you for the good work that you're doing as well. Uh, I, I certainly want to be included in this. I love the idea of making civics a variable for our adults. It's, it's something that is sorely needed. You know, I think that leads to more civic engagement. You know, like I'm looking at these kids from LYAC. You know, those kids are going to remain engaged their entire life, right? I mean, you know, they probably going to run for office as judges, representatives and governors and what-not.

Judge Bethancourt: Judge, I think.

Rep. Carter: Yeah, if you listen –, after I'm term limited, there's a kid from New Orleans out there. Uh, but so good work and please keep it up. Thanks.

Judge Bethancourt: Alright. And, uh, you know, the LCLCE website has, uh, uh, get to it, it's easy to get to LCLCE. On the left hand side, go to the ACE – A-C-E – Adult Civics Education.

Press that button and then it gives you everything you need to know and everything you need to present. You don't have to reinvent the wheel. You don't have to do anything other than –, we even have –, you can print the handouts. There's nothing you have to, to –, um, actually as I've said –, research or anything. We have it there for you – you want to present. And, um, the, uh, District Judge's Association, ah, has been very wonderful in, in supporting this program as has the Louisiana Supreme Court. And, uh, they actually allowed lawyers to earn some, uh, continuing education, um, hours to, uh, um, to learn how to give these presentations. Not that it's rocket science or anything, but you go through the steps –, to do. So anyway, alrighty then. So, well.

Judge Manning: Well, thank you again, Judge. Any other questions or comments for Judge Bethancourt? And you do have available to each of you –, it was distributed –, the, uh, statement about the Adult Civic Education and a listing of all the lesson plans or packages. If you will –, uh, that when you go online if you would like access to that information, you'll be able to provide that and go out to your civic organizations throughout the community and speak to them.

Judge Manning: So at this time we're going to have a little interactive program. A mock presentation, if you will, as though you were the Kiwanis Club or the Rotary Club. And again, we're preaching to the choir here. But, ah, I'm going to invite our Vice Chair Ms. Davis to assume the Chair and I relinquish the role so I can go down and present at this time. Is that agreeable? Thank you.

CHAIR CHANGE.

Judge Manning: And, uh, Judge Bethancourt, I appreciate all of the kind compliments you threw my way and I don't intend this to be the Judge Manning Show. That's not what this was about at all. But, we had hoped last time, if you may recall, that we were going to present to you at this time an ACE Program, but I believe Peggy was out at that time and wasn't able to be here. So, uh, that's –, this is our make-up. But, the way this would normally, uh, work and the particular program we had chosen today is entitled "Can You Pass The Test?". This was most recently presented during the Constitution Day and Citizenship Week activities in northeast Louisiana for the Northeast Monroe Rotary. So I'm going to utilize a similar format. Um, and at, at that time I wanted them to recall the importance of Constitution Day and Constitution Week. Uh, and it was on September 17, 1787, delegates to the Constitution Convention signed the United States Constitution in Philadelphia. Also that day, we're celebrating Citizenship Day. There was a natural, uh, person, who had just recently become a naturalized citizen, was sworn in the day before so we were able to recognize her at this important event. So I talked a little bit about, uh, what the organization – the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education – and what they do and how we'd expanded the programming offerings to Adult Civic Education or ACE for short. And then I highlighted, of course, the quote from Thomas Jefferson when he noted that a nation's

best defense is an educated citizenry. And you study the writings of Jefferson and the other Founding Fathers you quickly see that the education of which he spoke was not limited to the traditional notion of the Three R's. What we refer in common parlance as reading, writing and arithmetic. Never having suffered through the abuses of power of a king and in several instances abuses by a colonial governance, the education to which Jefferson spoke referred to citizens holding a basic knowledge and understanding of certain founding principles. The constitutional form of government; federalism limits on government power; checks and balances; the nature of a represented democracy or republic – these basic terms. What was the source of our rights? Respect for the rule of law and due process and equal justice under the law. Sadly, it appears that our national discourse and the citizens of our nation are moving away from a shared knowledge or common understanding of these principles. Recent studies by the National Assessment of Education of Progress have found that only 25% of students at upper elementary and secondary levels have proficient knowledge in civics and government and adult citizens don't fair any better. In a nationwide survey conducted by the Center for the Study of the American Dream, Xavier University, one in three native born citizens failed the civics portion of the United States Naturalization Test. In stark contrast to the 97 1/2% passage rate among immigrants applying for citizenship. The survey tested adult ci-, adult Americans on ten random questions taken directly from the United States Naturalization Test. Passing meant answering six out of the ten questions correctly. A survey found that if the passage rate was seven out of ten, one half of native-born American citizens would fail the test. The survey found that native-born citizens do best with elementary school level questions such as what is the name of the president of the United States, where is the Capitol of the United States, where is the Statute of Liberty, who was the first president, when do we celebrate Independence Day? However, the highest incorrect scores consistently concerned the United States Constitution, the governmental, legal and political structure of the republic, and basic facts related to current political life and the verification of key political decision makers. For example, 85% did not know the meaning of the rule of law. Eighty-two percent could not name two rights stated in the Declaration of Independence. Seventy-five percent were not able to directly answer what does the judicial branch do. Seventy-one percent were unable to identify what document constituted the supreme law of the land. Sixty-eight percent did not know how many justices were on the Supreme Court. Sixty-three percent could not name one of their two United States senators. Sixty-two percent could not identify what happened at the Constitutional Convention. Sixty-two percent could not answer the name of the Speaker of the United States House. Fifty-nine percent could not name one power delegated to the federal government. Sixty-two percent could not name the governor of their state. I think you get the picture. Professor Michael Ford, the Center's founding director and director of this national survey noted, "and while you certainly wouldn't expect everyone to know all the answers. For example, does it really matter if we don't know how many amendments there are to the Constitution? Well, no, but when almost 60% of respondents didn't even know what an amendment is, and the issue is not about sensationalizing who passed and who failed this test in the survey. It's about what voting aged American citizens specifically know and do not

know after twelve to eighteen years of school and 24/7 exposure to unfiltered news and multi-media. It would seem that our nation has entered an age of civic illiteracy. This illiteracy makes us more susceptible to manipulation and abuses of power, and threatens the very freedoms we treasure. In addressing this current state of affairs, I don't mean to leave you with gloom and doom, but to stress the importance of what we are about." In fact, what this commission is about – . Now, given the opportunity to participate in such a test as in this study, if you will, how would we fair? Well, we're going to find out. At this time, we're going to take a short recess so that my assistants can pass out some cards. I ask you to leave these face down and then when we return, I'll give you some further instructions. So at this point we're going to take a short recess in the commission meeting so we can distribute these cards.

The chairman called for a recess at 3:00 p.m. and the commission reconvened at 3:24 p.m.

WITNESSES PRESENT:

Information Only:

Randall L. Bethancourt, LCLCE, New Orleans, LA

VIII. CONSIDERATION OF ANY OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

There were no other matters that came before the commission.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR CHANGE.

Judge Manning: Ah, it's there on "Can You Pass The Test?" Again, I want to thank the young people with the Legislative Youth Advisory Council for your hard work and your leadership your dedication. Are there any other matters that may come before this commission? Hearing none, the chair will entertain a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Courtney: I so move.

Judge Manning: Properly moved. Is there a second?

Mr. Shutt: Second.

Judge Manning: Any opposition? Hearing none, it passes unanimously. Thank you, you have a great Thanksgiving everyone.

There being no further business before the commission, Ms. Courtney moved to adjourn. Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Judge C. Wendell Manning
Chairman

June 26, 2020
Approval Date