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CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 5()

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY

**Offered:
Referred:**

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVE KELLER

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 **"An Act requiring school districts to develop and require a history of American**
2 **constitutionalism course and examination in secondary schools in the state; and**
3 **providing for an effective date."**

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

5 *** Section 1.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section
6 to read:

7 SHORT TITLE. This Act may be known as the American Constitutionalism History
8 Literacy Act.

9 *** Sec. 2.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to
10 read:

11 LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS. The legislature finds that

12 (1) the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of
13 Confederation, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights were seminal
14 events in the history of the United States of America;

1 (2) American constitutionalism represents this country's greatest gift to human
2 freedom; its ideals, ideas, and institutions have influenced different people in different lands
3 at different times;

4 (3) an early understanding of American constitutionalism empowers students
5 to make rational, evidence-based decisions regarding their civic judgments, rights, and duties;

6 (4) a number of historical written documents that appeared over a span of 15
7 years continue to serve to define our national identity and our constitutional republic form of
8 government: the Declaration of Independence, the first state constitutions, the Articles of
9 Confederation, the Constitution of the United States, the Federalist Papers, and the Bill of
10 Rights; a general understanding of the philosophies and historical context that generated those
11 documents is an essential element in the education of Alaska students;

12 (5) the Citizens' Advisory Task Force on Civics Education Policy, in its report
13 dated January 2008, made a strong case for improving civics education; this Act should be
14 applied in the context of school district response to the recommendations in the report.

15 * **Sec. 3.** AS 14.14 is amended by adding a new section to read:

16 **Sec. 14.14.095. Secondary school history of American constitutionalism**
17 **course and examination.** (a) The chief school administrator of a school district shall
18 develop and submit to the governing body of a school district for approval a syllabus
19 for a one-semester course and final examination in the history of American
20 constitutionalism to be taught to all students enrolled in grade 12 in the district. An
21 approved syllabus must ensure and test students' understanding of the history of
22 American constitutionalism as portrayed in the Declaration of Independence, the first
23 state constitutions, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution of the United States,
24 the Federalist Papers, the Bill of Rights, and other historical documents produced in
25 the founding of our constitutional republic model of government.

26 (b) A district may not issue a secondary school diploma to a student who does
27 not successfully complete the course and examination described in (a) of this section.
28 A school district may not grant a waiver of this requirement.

29 (c) In this section, "district" has the meaning given in AS 14.17.990.

30 * **Sec. 4** This Act takes effect July 1, 2012.