



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HCR 31		DATE: 4/1/2026	
COMMITTEE: Elementary and Secondary Education			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
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EMAIL: keller.brian@wgmail.org	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 4/1/2026 7:45 AM	

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.

To: The Honorable Representative Martin and Members of the Committee **From:** The Missouri Civic Learning Coalition (MOCLC) **Date:** March 31, 2026 **Subject:** Public Testimony in Support of HCR 31: The Missouri Seal of Civic Recognition

The Missouri Civic Learning Coalition (MOCLC) is a broad, cross-ideological network of educators, students, and advocates dedicated to ensuring every Missouri student has access to high-quality civic education. We envision a "Show Me State" where graduates are thoughtful, informed, and engaged members of their communities. To that end, MOCLC stands in strong support of the spirit of HCR 31, which seeks to establish a "State of Missouri Seal of Civic Recognition" to celebrate students' commitment to patriotism, ethics, and constitutional literacy.

Alignment with MOCLC Goals

Establishing a "Civic Seal" has been a core priority of our coalition's policy agenda. We believe HCR 31 provides a vital "carrot" to encourage students to master the functional mechanics of local, state, and national governance. By recognizing those who go above and beyond in their civic studies and community service, Missouri can create a premier credential for the next generation of leaders.

Strategic Recommendations for Implementation

To ensure HCR 31 becomes a national gold standard, MOCLC proposes a "Missouri Merit" model that streamlines the bill's requirements and ensures equality of opportunity for all students:

Prioritize Fiscal Integrity: For this initiative to succeed, it is essential to restore the \$500,000 for "Patriotism and Civics" professional development funding. This core investment, previously supported by MOCLC, ensures that teachers are properly equipped to guide students toward the high standards envisioned by this seal.

Merit-Based Transcript Designation: Rather than a complex 6-year tracking requirement, we recommend a high-standard transcript designation earned during high school. This reduces administrative burdens on schools and provides students with a permanent workforce credential that Missouri employers and vocational programs will value.

Reward Traditional "Practicing Democracy": The Seal should recognize students who engage in rigorous, time-tested activities such as Mock Trial, JROTC, American Legion Boys/Girls State, Model UN, and FFA. Moving from a "club-based" model to one based on performance mastery ensures that rural students or those with after-school jobs have a clear "on-ramp" to success.

Ensure Local Flexibility: Empowering local districts to certify excellence based on state-defined standards maintains local control and ensures no student is overlooked by a top-down bureaucratic process.

Conclusion

By streamlining HCR 31 into a transcript-focused, merit-based incentive, we can protect the taxpayer

while ensuring every Missouri graduate has a deep-seated pride in our constitutional system. MOCLC welcomes the opportunity to work with this committee to make the Missouri Seal of Civic Recognition a powerful tool for building a more engaged and responsible citizenry.

Respectfully submitted,

The Missouri Civic Learning Coalition (MOCLC)



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WITNESS NAME: JIM MARTIN		PHONE NUMBER:	
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WITNESS NAME: SARAH BERRY		PHONE NUMBER:	
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HCR 31 establishes a “State of Missouri Seal of Civic Recognition” tied to specific curricular, behavioral, and service-based criteria, raising substantial constitutional concerns regarding compelled speech, unconstitutional conditions, viewpoint discrimination, and equal protection.

Although framed as a voluntary recognition program, the structure of this proposal conditions state-conferred benefits—attached directly to a student’s diploma—on participation in state-preferred ideological, civic, and service activities. This includes required engagement with curriculum selected by a state-appointed workgroup, participation in approved organizations, mentorship by government officials, and a formal commitment to post-graduation civic or military service.

This framework raises concerns under the doctrine of unconstitutional conditions, as the state is effectively conditioning access to a state-recognized benefit on a student’s agreement to engage in specific expressive, ideological, and behavioral conduct. While students may technically decline participation, the linkage of recognition to graduation credentials creates substantial pressure within a public education environment, where participation cannot be considered fully voluntary.

The program further implicates compelled speech principles, as students are incentivized to engage in structured expressions of “patriotism,” “morality,” and “civic commitment” as defined or influenced by state-selected curriculum and programming. Where the state defines both the content and the pathway for recognition, students are placed in a position where meaningful dissent may result in exclusion from state-endorsed acknowledgment.

Additionally, HCR 31 raises viewpoint discrimination concerns by privileging certain forms of civic participation—such as involvement with specified organizations, mentorship through government actors, and military or ROTC pathways—over other forms of civic engagement. The state may not favor one set of ideological or expressive activities while disadvantaging others in the distribution of benefits tied to public education.

The lack of defined standards governing the “Civics and Patriotic Workgroup” further introduces due process concerns, as the bill provides no objective criteria for curriculum content, neutrality, or oversight. This grants broad, undefined discretion to shape educational materials and qualifying criteria without statutory guardrails.

The structure also raises equal protection concerns, as recognition is not based solely on academic merit but on access to and participation in specific programs, organizations, and mentorship

opportunities, which may not be equally available to all students across different schools or communities.

Finally, the use of public funds to administer and support this program—while embedding these constitutional vulnerabilities—raises additional concerns regarding the allocation of state resources toward programs that condition benefits on ideological alignment and structured participation.

Bottom line:

HCR 31 conditions state-recognized student achievement on participation in state-directed ideological, civic, and service activities, raising serious constitutional concerns regarding compelled speech, unconstitutional conditions, viewpoint discrimination, due process, and equal protection.

The General Assembly is hereby placed on notice that enactment of this proposal may invite constitutional scrutiny where state-conferred educational benefits are conditioned on participation in state-preferred expressive and civic conduct.



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WITNESS NAME			
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WITNESS NAME: SUSAN GIBSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
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