

VETO MESSAGE: No

GOVERNOR'S PRESS RELEASE ON SIGNING: Yes

FOLLOWING WERE PRINTED:

To check for circulating copies, contact New Jersey State Government Publications at the State Library (609) 278-2640 ext.103 or <mailto:refdesk@njstatelib.org>

REPORTS: No

HEARINGS: No

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES: No

CL/MM

P.L. 2023, CHAPTER 274, *approved January 16, 2024*
Senate, No. 2304 (*Second Reprint*)

1 AN ACT concerning excused absences from public school for civic
2 events and supplementing chapter 36 of Title 18A of the New
3 Jersey Statutes.

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

7
8 1. As used in this act, “civic event” means an event sponsored
9 by a government entity, ¹**【the community】** a community-based
10 organization¹, or a ¹**【local】**¹ nonprofit organization ¹**【to address】**
11 that incorporates elements of service learning whereby students
12 learn and develop through organized service. A civic event shall
13 address¹ an issue of public concern such as community health and
14 safety or environmental, economic, or community well-being.

15
16 2. a. Notwithstanding any law, rule, or regulation to the
17 contrary, a pupil of a public school in grades six through 12 who is
18 absent from school to attend a civic event shall have one ¹State-
19 excused¹ absence each school year for that purpose recorded as an
20 excused absence on the pupil’s attendance record or on that of any
21 group or class of which the pupil is a member ¹, provided that a
22 written notice signed by a parent or guardian of the pupil is
23 presented to the proper school authority pursuant to subsection b. of
24 this section¹. A board of education may permit additional excused
25 absences for such purposes. Any transcript, application,
26 employment form, or any similar form on which information
27 concerning a pupil's attendance record is requested shall show, with
28 respect to absences, only absences other than excused absences
29 authorized pursuant to this subsection.

30 b. The parent or guardian of a pupil shall provide ¹**【at least five**
31 **school days’ notice】** a signed written notice of an intended excused
32 absence to attend a civic event at least five school days¹ in advance
33 of the intended excused absence and such ¹other¹ documentation as
34 the superintendent or administrative principal of the school district
35 deems necessary to prove that the pupil meets the requirements for
36 an excused absence pursuant to subsection a. of this section.

37

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **【thus】** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Senate SED committee amendments adopted May 9, 2022.

²Assembly ASL committee amendments adopted December 18, 2023.

1 3. ¹a.¹ The Commissioner of Education, with the approval of
2 the State Board of Education, shall ¹~~prescribe rules~~ provide
3 guidance to school districts¹ relative to ¹excused¹ absences for civic
4 events ¹~~including, but not limited to, a list of civic events where it~~
5 shall be mandatory to excuse a pupil. Nothing in this section shall
6 be construed to limit the right of a board of education, in its
7 discretion, to excuse absences for civic events not included on the
8 list¹.

9 ¹b. The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and
10 regulations pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,”
11 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) necessary to effectuate the
12 provisions of this act.¹

13
14 4. This act shall take effect immediately ²~~and shall first~~
15 apply to the 2023-2024 school year¹².

16
17
18
19
20

Permits excused absences for students who attend civic events.

SENATE, No. 2304

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 21, 2022

Sponsored by:

Senator VIN GOPAL

District 11 (Monmouth)

Senator JAMES BEACH

District 6 (Burlington and Camden)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator Zwicker

SYNOPSIS

Permits excused absences for students who attend civic events.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/9/2022)

S2304 GOPAL, BEACH

2

1 AN ACT concerning excused absences from public school for civic
2 events and supplementing chapter 36 of Title 18A of the New
3 Jersey Statutes.

4

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

7

8 1. As used in this act, “civic event” means an event sponsored
9 by a government entity, the community, or a local nonprofit
10 organization to address an issue of public concern such as
11 community health and safety or environmental, economic, or
12 community well-being.

13

14 2. a. Notwithstanding any law, rule, or regulation to the
15 contrary, a pupil of a public school in grades six through 12 who is
16 absent from school to attend a civic event shall have one absence
17 each school year for that purpose recorded as an excused absence
18 on the pupil’s attendance record or on that of any group or class of
19 which the pupil is a member. A board of education may permit
20 additional excused absences for such purposes. Any transcript,
21 application, employment form, or any similar form on which
22 information concerning a pupil’s attendance record is requested
23 shall show, with respect to absences, only absences other than
24 excused absences authorized pursuant to this subsection.

25

26 b. The parent or guardian of a pupil shall provide at least five
27 school days’ notice in advance of the intended excused absence and
28 such documentation as the superintendent or administrative
29 principal of the school district deems necessary to prove that the
30 pupil meets the requirements for an excused absence pursuant to
31 subsection a. of this section.

31

32 3. The Commissioner of Education, with the approval of the
33 State Board of Education, shall prescribe rules relative to absences
34 for civic events including, but not limited to, a list of civic events
35 where it shall be mandatory to excuse a pupil. Nothing in this
36 section shall be construed to limit the right of a board of education,
37 in its discretion, to excuse absences for civic events not included on
38 the list.

39

40 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

41

42

43

STATEMENT

44

45 This bill would permit public school pupils in grades six through
46 12 one excused absence to attend a civic event each school year.
47 School districts would be permitted to provide additional excused

S2304 GOPAL, BEACH

1 absences for such purposes. Excused absences taken under this bill
2 would not be reflected on student attendance records.

3 Parents or guardians of pupils who wish to use an excused
4 absence under this bill would be required to provide at least five
5 school days' notice in advance of the intended excused absence and
6 such documentation as the school district deems necessary to prove
7 that the pupil meets the requirements for an excused absence
8 pursuant to the provisions of this bill.

9 The bill defines "civic event" as an event sponsored by a
10 government entity, the community, or a local nonprofit organization
11 to address an issue of public concern such as community health and
12 safety or environmental, economic, or community well-being.

13 The Commissioner of Education, with the approval of the State
14 Board of Education, would be responsible for prescribing rules
15 relative to absences for civic events. This would include, but not be
16 limited to, a list of civic events where it would be mandatory to
17 excuse a pupil. The bill would not be construed to limit the right of
18 boards of education to excuse absences for civic events not included
19 on the commissioner's list.

ASSEMBLY STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 2304

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 18, 2023

The Assembly State and Local Government Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 2304 (1R).

As amended, this bill would permit public school pupils in grades six through 12 one State-excused absence to attend a civic event each school year. School districts would be permitted to provide additional excused absences for such purposes. Excused absences taken under this bill would not be reflected on student attendance records.

Parents or guardians of pupils who wish to use an excused absence under the bill would be required to provide a signed written notice of the intended excused absence at least five school days in advance of the intended excused absence and such documentation as the school district deems necessary to prove that the pupil meets the requirements for an excused absence under the bill.

The bill defines “civic event” as an event sponsored by a government entity, a community-based organization, or a nonprofit organization that incorporates elements of service learning whereby students learn and develop through organized service. A civic event would also address an issue of public concern such as community health and safety or environmental, economic, or community well-being.

The Commissioner of Education, with the approval of the State Board of Education, would provide guidance to school districts relative to absences for civic events.

As amended and reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Assembly Bill No. 1271 (2R), which also was amended and reported by the committee on this same date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to provide that its provisions will take effect immediately as compared to the 2023-2024 school year.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2304

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 9, 2022

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 2304 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill would permit public school pupils in grades six through 12 one State-excused absence to attend a civic event each school year. School districts would be permitted to provide additional excused absences for such purposes. Excused absences taken under this bill would not be reflected on student attendance records.

Parents or guardians of pupils who wish to use an excused absence under the bill would be required to provide a signed written notice of the intended excused absence at least five school days in advance of the intended excused absence and such documentation as the school district deems necessary to prove that the pupil meets the requirements for an excused absence under the bill.

The bill defines “civic event” as an event sponsored by a government entity, a community-based organization, or a nonprofit organization that incorporates elements of service learning whereby students learn and develop through organized service. A civic event would also address an issue of public concern such as community health and safety or environmental, economic, or community well-being.

The Commissioner of Education, with the approval of the State Board of Education, would provide guidance to school districts relative to absences for civic events. The provisions of the bill would first apply to the 2023-2024 school year.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

The committee amended the bill to change the definition of a “civic event” to provide that the event would incorporate elements of service learning whereby students learn and develop through organized service. The committee amendments provide that a signed written notice is to be submitted by a parent or guardian at least five school days in advance of a student’s intended excused absence to attend a civic event. The amendments require the Commissioner of Education, with the approval of the State Board of Education, to provide guidance to school districts relative to absences for civic events. Lastly, the amendments insert a rulemaking provision to effectuate the provisions of the bill.

ASSEMBLY, No. 1271

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

220th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2022 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman STERLEY S. STANLEY

District 18 (Middlesex)

Assemblyman KEVIN J. ROONEY

District 40 (Bergen, Essex, Morris and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS

Permits excused absences for students who attend civic events.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 AN ACT concerning excused absences from public school for civic
2 events and supplementing chapter 36 of Title 18A of the New
3 Jersey Statutes.

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

7
8 1. a. Notwithstanding any law, rule, or regulation to the
9 contrary, a pupil of a public school in grades six through 12 who is
10 absent from school to attend a civic event shall have one absence
11 each school year for that purpose recorded as an excused absence
12 on the pupil's attendance record or on that of any group or class of
13 which the pupil is a member. A board of education may permit
14 additional excused absences for such purposes. Any transcript,
15 application, employment form, or any similar form on which
16 information concerning a pupil's attendance record is requested
17 shall show, with respect to absences, only absences other than
18 excused absences authorized pursuant to this subsection.

19 b. The parent or guardian of a pupil shall provide at least five
20 school days' notice in advance of the intended excused absence and
21 such documentation as the superintendent or administrative
22 principal of the school district deems necessary to prove that the
23 pupil meets the requirements for an excused absence pursuant to
24 subsection a. of this section.

25
26 2. The Commissioner of Education, with the approval of the
27 State Board of Education, shall prescribe rules relative to absences
28 for civic events including, but not limited to, a list of civic events
29 where it shall be mandatory to excuse a pupil. Nothing in this
30 section shall be construed to limit the right of a board of education,
31 in its discretion, to excuse absences for civic events not included on
32 the list.

33
34 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

35
36
37 STATEMENT

38
39 This bill would permit public school pupils in grades six through
40 12 one excused absence to attend a civic event each school year.
41 School districts would be permitted to provide additional excused
42 absences for such purposes. Excused absences taken under this bill
43 would not be reflected on student attendance records.

44 Parents or guardians of pupils who wish to use an excused
45 absence under this bill would be required to provide at least five
46 school days' notice in advance of the intended excused absence and
47 such documentation as the school district deems necessary to prove

A1271 STANLEY, ROONEY

3

1 that the pupil meets the requirements for an excused absence
2 pursuant to the provisions of this bill.

3 The Commissioner of Education, with the approval of the State
4 Board of Education, would be responsible for prescribing rules
5 relative to absences for civic events. This would include, but not be
6 limited to, a list of civic events where it would be mandatory to
7 excuse a pupil. The bill would not be construed to limit the right of
8 boards of education to excuse absences for civic events not included
9 on the commissioner's list.

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1271

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 10, 2022

The Assembly Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 1271 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill would permit public school pupils in grades six through 12 one excused absence to attend a civic event each school year. School districts would be permitted to provide additional excused absences for such purposes. Excused absences taken under this bill would not be reflected on student attendance records.

Parents or guardians of pupils who wish to use an excused absence under this bill would be required to provide at least five school days' notice in advance of the intended excused absence and such documentation as the school district deems necessary to prove that the pupil meets the requirements for an excused absence pursuant to the provisions of this bill.

The bill defines "civic event" as an event sponsored by a government entity, the community, or a local nonprofit organization to address an issue of public concern such as community health and safety or environmental, economic, or community well-being.

The Commissioner of Education, with the approval of the State Board of Education, would be responsible for prescribing rules relative to absences for civic events. This would include, but not be limited to, a list of civic events where it would be mandatory to excuse a pupil. The bill would not be construed to limit the right of boards of education to excuse absences for civic events not included on the commissioner's list.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2022-2023 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to define a "civic event" as an event sponsored by a government entity, the community, or a local nonprofit organization to address an issue of public concern such as community health and safety or environmental, economic, or community well-being.

ASSEMBLY STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 1271

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 18, 2023

The Assembly State and Local Government Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 1271 (1R).

As amended, this bill would permit public school pupils in grades six through 12 one State-excused absence to attend a civic event each school year. School districts would be permitted to provide additional excused absences for such purposes. Excused absences taken under this bill would not be reflected on student attendance records.

Parents or guardians of pupils who wish to use an excused absence under the bill would be required to provide a signed written notice of the intended excused absence at least five school days in advance of the intended excused absence and such documentation as the school district deems necessary to prove that the pupil meets the requirements for an excused absence under the bill.

The bill defines “civic event” as an event sponsored by a government entity, a community-based organization, or a nonprofit organization that incorporates elements of service learning whereby students learn and develop through organized service. A civic event would also address an issue of public concern such as community health and safety or environmental, economic, or community well-being.

The Commissioner of Education, with the approval of the State Board of Education, would provide guidance to school districts relative to absences for civic events.

As amended and reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Senate Bill No. 2304 (2R), which also was amended and reported by the committee on this same date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

- change the definition of a “civic event” to provide that the event would incorporate elements of service learning whereby students learn and develop through organized service;
- provide that a signed written notice is to be submitted by a parent or guardian at least five school days in advance of a student’s intended excused absence to attend a civic event;
- require the Commissioner of Education, with the approval of the State Board of Education, to provide guidance to school districts relative to absences for civic events; and
- insert a rulemaking provision to effectuate the provisions of the bill.

Governor Murphy Signs Bipartisan Legislation Promoting Civic Engagement Among Students

01/16/2024

TRENTON— Governor Phil Murphy today signed S2304/A1271, passed with bipartisan support, permitting each public school student from grades 6 through 12 to have one State excused absence per school year to be used for a civic event. These State-excused absences can only be applied to an event sponsored by a government entity, a community-based organization, or a nonprofit. The civic event is required to incorporate an element of service learning and address a public issue or concern.

This legislation had bipartisan support and contributes to long standing efforts by the Murphy Administration to expand civic engagement and empower New Jersey's youth. Earlier this month, the Governor signed the New Voter Empowerment Act, allowing 17-year-old students to vote in a primary election if they will be 18 years of age by the time of the general election.

"Providing students the option to attend civic events throughout their academic careers creates an opportunity for our future leaders to become more engaged in our democracy and society," **said Governor Murphy**. "These events will not only educate students outside of the classroom, but they have the potential to spark an interest in public service and community work. The next generations of changemakers are in New Jersey public schools, and it's crucial that we offer every resource available to help them achieve their dreams."

To apply the excused absence, parents or guardians of the student must provide a signed written notice at least five school days prior, as well as relevant documentation proving the event meets all established requirements. School districts may choose to allot additional excused absences for these same purposes.

"Legislating excused absences for students attending civic events is a significant milestone in efforts to promote civic education and participation," **said Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education**. "By recognizing the educational value of participation in civic events, we are not only providing students with an opportunity to be informed and engaged members of society; we are also sending a clear message that civic responsibilities are valued. This legislation aligns with the vision of nurturing well-rounded, responsible individuals who actively contribute to their communities."

Primary sponsors of S2304/A1271 include Senators Vin Gopal and James Beach, and Assemblymembers Ellen Park, Sterley Stanley, and Kevin Rooney.

"Certainly our students learn much through classroom instruction, readings and debates with their peers about the workings of government, and may also be made aware of public policy issues important to their communities," **said Senator Gopal, Chair of the Education Committee**. "Yet there are some things that can only be learned through direct participation and civic engagement. This law will help make that kind of eye-witness learning and development more accessible."

"Exposing students to civic engagement provides a unique educational experience," **said Senator Beach**. "By creating opportunities for students to step outside the classroom and witness government in action, we are instilling the values of citizenship at an early age."

"This bill recognizes that education doesn't only take place in a classroom," **said Assemblywoman Park**. "We hope to build the next generation of American leaders and to do so, we need to do everything we can to encourage our youth to get involved in their community, their government and in doing so, building their own future. I am glad to see this bill become law and I look forward to all the great stories our young folks will have in this upcoming election year."

"As elected officials we need to prepare the next generation of New Jerseyans to become effective members of their communities by understanding what it means to be engaged in civic life," **said Assemblyman Stanley**. "By allowing students excused absences to attend civic events we are taking an important step towards ensuring our civic institutions continue to receive the engagement that is vital to our ability to serve our residents by giving students the experience necessary to become informed and engaged citizens."

"Academics is just one part of a well-rounded education. While it is important to keep up with studies and homework, students should also be encouraged to be active, engaged citizens in the world from a young age," **said former Assemblyman Rooney**.

"Students, whether they are testifying at the State House, running a voter registration drive, or attending a community event, will gain valuable real world and hands-on civic engagement experience," **said Jesse Burns, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey**. "We applaud the Governor, the legislative sponsors, and the students who championed this bill for helping shape democracy's future leaders."

"New Jersey is sending a bold statement to the rest of the country by taking its students' civic engagement to the experiential level," **said Julien Catalan, Chair of the New Jersey High School Democrats**. "I applaud our state legislators' bipartisanship in getting this law passed and leading our generation by example; I am incredibly hopeful and excited for New Jersey students to have access to and feel encouraged to participate in the political process."

"Giving young people more opportunities to be civically engaged is crucial to building the next generation of leaders," **said Katie Mirne, Chair of the New Jersey High School Republicans**. "I'm proud of the bipartisan work our team has accomplished and look forward to helping forge the future of America."