

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6468

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As of January 21, 2006

**Title:** An act relating to educational assessments.

**Brief Description:** Requiring classroom-based civics assessments.

**Sponsors:** Senators Johnson, Schmidt, Roach, Zarelli, Stevens, Mulliken, Carrell, Benton, Deccio, Parlette, Honeyford, Benson, Keiser, Kline and Kohl-Welles.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 1/20/06.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

**Staff:** Susan Mielke (786-7422)

**Background:** The State Board of Education sets the minimum subject areas and credits required for high school graduation. The requirements include 2.5 credits in social studies, including one credit in United States history and government, which must include the study of the U.S. Constitution, and one-half credit in Washington State history and government, which must include the study of the State Constitution. Additionally, school districts are encouraged to consider including information on the culture, history, and government of the American Indian peoples. A credit in civics is not currently required; however, courses in civics, economics, sociology, political science, international relations, or related courses may be used to complete the required credits.

The Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), which represent the specific academic skills and knowledge which students should have, does include civics. By the end of the 2008-09 school year, school districts must have assessments or other strategies to assure that students have an opportunity to learn the EALRs in social studies. Beginning with the 2008-09 school year, school districts must annually submit an implementation verification report to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

In 2004, the Legislature directed the OSPI to provide classroom-based assessment models and other assessment options on the OSPI's website for voluntary use by school districts. The OSPI has developed classroom-based assessments at the fifth, eighth, and high school levels. Training is available through the OSPI on how to score the assessments.

**Summary of Bill:** For the purposes of the assessments and other strategies that school districts must have for students in social studies, "social studies" includes "history, geography, civics, economics, and social studies skills."

Beginning with the 2008-09 school year, school districts must require students in fourth or fifth, seventh or eighth, and eleventh or twelfth grades to complete at least one classroom-based assessment in civics. The assessment must be selected from a list approved by the

OSPI. School districts must annually submit a report to the OSPI documenting the use of the classroom-based assessment.

**Appropriation:** Twenty-five thousand dollars is appropriated to the Superintendent of Public Instruction to provide competitive grants to school districts for curriculum alignment, development of innovative civics projects, and other activities that support the civics assessments. Districts receiving a grant must make the products developed under the grant widely available as examples of best practices.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** This bill has bipartisan sponsorship. We have heard over the years about the need to beef up civics education for our students. Most students have a dearth of knowledge in civics. The curriculum is there and the classroom-based assessments are available. This bill is the logical next step. It mandates action but the action and the timeline is doable. The classroom-based assessments developed by OSPI are a great resource to implement this. The bill provides greater flexibility with accountability with the use of the classroom-based assessments and is broader than just mandating a course. Many teachers have already received classroom-based assessments training. Additionally, the classroom-based assessments permit use of the other material that could be used that are available including "We the People", "Project Citizen", the YMCA "Youth in Government", the 4-H program.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testimony Other:** Education reform has put great tension and pressures on all the parts of our public education system. The emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics and soon science through the WASLs has created much of the pressure. It has also created a tension between the curriculum areas. To try to create a balance we supported the development of CBAs in the other subject areas to honor all the curriculums that are not addressed by the WASL. We encourage you to proceed carefully. If you target civics you want to be careful not to overlook the arts, and physical education.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Senator Stephen Johnson, prime sponsor; Don Rash, Association of School Principals; Leslie Goldstein and Caleb Perkins, OSPI.

OTHER: Gary King, Washington Education Association.