

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1896

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 22, 2018

Title: An act relating to the expansion of civics education in public schools.

Brief Description: Expanding civics education in public school.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Dolan, Stonier, Lovick, Springer, Appleton, Bergquist, Manweller, Tarleton, Frame, Goodman and Ormsby).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/09/18, 98-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/20/18, 2/22/18 [DPA-WM, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Amended Bill

- Requires that by the 2020-21 school year, each school district with a high school must provide a mandatory .5-credit stand-alone civics course with specific content requirements for each high school student.
- Establishes an expanded civics education teacher training program within the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), subject to the availability of funds, to provide civics-specific teacher training, professional learning opportunities, and developed teacher training materials.
- Instructs OSPI to select two school districts to serve as demonstration sites for enhanced civics education.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Rolfes, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Member; Hawkins, Hunt, Mullet, Pedersen and Rivers.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Billig and Padden.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: High School Graduation Requirements. High school graduation requirements in Washington State are formulated by the State Board of Education and set by rule, subject to certain statutory guidelines. Modifications to graduation requirements are set in four-year increments, so as to not change requirements for students after beginning the equivalent of a four-year program. Requirements at the state level are minimum requirements; districts may add more and ultimately determine if standards have been met by graduating students.

Social Studies and Civics Graduation Requirements. Currently, high school students must take three social studies credits, consisting of 2.5 credits in prescribed courses and a half credit social studies elective. Of these courses, one credit is required in United States history, and one credit is required in contemporary world history, geography, and problems, which can be satisfied by taking an equivalency in economics, sociology, civics, political science, international relations, or related courses with emphasis on contemporary world problems. A half credit is required in civics.

State law requires that the content of the civics requirement must at a minimum include:

- federal, state, and local government organization and procedures;
- rights and responsibilities of citizens addressed in the Washington and United States constitutions;
- current issues addressed at each level of government; and
- electoral issues, including elections, ballot measures, initiatives, and referenda.

Basic Education and Civics Requirements. The state's program of basic education is a set of minimum standards for public schools in Washington, as required by the state Constitution. Of the four main goals of basic education set in Washington law, the second goal states that each district must provide opportunities to every student to develop the knowledge and skills essential to know and apply the core concepts and principles of, among other subjects, civics and history, including different cultures and participation in representative government.

While curriculum in these courses is mostly set at the district level, OSPI does provide essential academic learning requirements that state the skills and knowledge high school students should attain based on the four main goals of basic education. These are set out in the K-12 Social Studies Learning Standards.

Summary of Amended Bill: Mandatory Civics Stand-Alone Course. Beginning with or before the 2020-21 school year, each district that operates a high school must provide a mandatory stand-alone course in civics for each high school student. The course must be one-half a credit and must include course content on:

- federal, state, tribal and local government organization and procedures;
- rights and responsibilities of citizens addressed in the Washington and United States constitutions;
- current issues addressed at each level of government;
- electoral issues, including elections, ballot measures, initiatives, and referenda;
- the study and completion of the civics component of the naturalization test administered by the United States; and

- the importance in a free society of living the basic values and character traits listed in state law as essential to individual liberty, fulfillment, and happiness.

School districts and the State Board of Education may not require students to obtain a passing grade in the stand-alone course as a requirement for high school graduation.

The current statute in Washington law pertaining to content of civics requirement is repealed.

Civics Education Teacher Training Program. An expanded civics education teacher training program is established within OSPI. The program must provide for the selection of a team of social studies teachers and civics education specialists, who must:

- develop teacher training materials containing civics information on various types of governments and the civics component of the United States naturalization test, using existing open educational resources;
- provide teacher training across the state using specific tools established by OSPI; and
- provide professional learning opportunities as described by state law.

Enhanced Civics Education Demonstration Sites. OSPI must select two districts to serve as demonstration sites for enhanced civics education. These districts must be diverse in size and geographic/demographic makeup, and will:

- implement and assess an in-depth civics education program;
- collaborate with programs and agencies in the local community in order to expand after-school and summer civics education opportunities;
- monitor and report the level of penetration of civics education in school and out-of-school programs;
- ensure that underserved students are prioritized in program implementation;
- develop evaluation standards and a procedure for endorsing a civics education curriculum for use in other districts and out-of-school programs; and
- provide an annual report by December 1 each year to the Governor and the education committees of the Legislature.

EFFECT OF EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE AMENDMENT(S): Eliminates the provision that the State Board of Education or school districts may not require a passing grade on the course as a requirement for high school graduation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Second Substitute House Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: Requiring a stand-alone course will place a greater emphasis on civics in education. Having a robust civics education program helps strengthen democracy. Incorporating out-of-classroom experiences

will help engage students in civics and improve civic discourse. Ongoing professional development will provide great help in furthering civic education. The demonstration sites could provide better understanding of how to best implement a civic curriculum.

CON: Rural schools should be able to make their own decisions on encompassing civics into their curricula, based on local needs.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Laurie Dolan, Prime Sponsor; David Beard, School's Out Washington; Carol Coe, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Karen Verrill, League of Women Voters of Washington; Terry Bergeson, interim Dean of Education and Kinesiology, Pacific Lutheran University.

CON: Marcus Morgan, Reardan Edwall School District.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.