

Chair Dembrow and Members,

I am a patent litigation attorney and I have voted in every primary and general election I could. I am concerned about the general lack of basic civics proficiency in Oregon.

I believe people are interested in how our government functions once they are forced to witness it. Therefore, I urge you to amend SB 513 to require for a high school diploma:

- 1.completion with a passing grade of at least a 5-day per week one-semester class in civics;
- 2.the curriculum including at least study of the most recent Oregon Voters Pamphlet, training on filling out and returning a ballot, and observing in person or by live video a state or federal court proceeding, a town, city or county council meeting, and a state or federal legislative committee hearing, followed by classroom instruction regarding the same; and
- 3.passing a test approved by the State Dept. of Education and based in part on the civics portion of the U.S. naturalization test.

The current bill is not strong enough. It essentially requires nothing of a local school district. The local school district could define civics proficiency in any manner it wished.

Below are some State laws of interest on this subject.

Louisiana

Requires 0.5 unit Civics for a high school diploma:

(i) The curriculum for Civics, and courses permitted to substitute for Civics, shall contain a unit of study that includes civics-related subject matter of which naturalized citizens are required to demonstrate a knowledge.

(ii) As a means to inform civics-related curricula and instruction, each student enrolled in Civics, or a course permitted to substitute for Civics, shall be administered a test based upon the civics portion of the naturalization test used by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to survey his knowledge of the fundamentals of the history, principles, and form of the United States government.

(b) The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education shall promulgate rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Subsection.

La. R.S. 17:274.1, LAC 28:CXI.1301

Illinois

Requires for a high school diploma:

"at least one semester must be civics, which shall help young people acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives. Civics course content shall focus on government institutions, the discussion of current and controversial issues, service learning, and simulations of the democratic process. School districts may utilize private funding available for the purposes of offering civics education."

105 ILCS 5/27-22.a.4

Michigan

"A high school in this state which offers 12 grades shall require a 1-semester course of study of 5 periods per week in civics which shall include the form and functions of the federal, state, and local governments and shall stress the rights and responsibilities of citizens. A diploma shall not be issued by a high school to a pupil who has not successfully completed this course. This requirement shall not be applicable as a graduation requirement for a high school pupil who has enlisted or been inducted into military service."

MCL 380.1278a, M.C.L.A. 380.1166

Thank you for your service.

John D. Vandenberg

Sherwood, OR

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