



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 101-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

March 10, 2021

To: [Senate Committee on Education](#)
Chair, Senator Michael Dembrow
Vice-Chair, Senator Chuck Thomsen

Re: **Civics Education bills** - Comment
[SB 702](#) Establishes Task Force on Social Studies Standards.
[SB 683](#) Requires school districts to provide instruction on racist history of this country and state.
[SB 513](#) Requires student to demonstrate proficiency in civics to receive high school diploma.

LWVOR agrees that civics education and civil discourse are imperative. We believe the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) already has excellent curriculum and standards in place and has continually updated them. Numerous civics-related bills have been filed this legislative session, and we would like to provide comments on those before the committee today as well as several others. We are aware that [SB 744](#), already heard by this committee, directs the Department of Education (DOE) to **review state requirements for a high school diploma**. LWVOR encourages this overall review and encourages any civics requirements be considered in this broader review, rather than in isolation.

We believe that [SB 683](#) and [SB 702](#) address curriculum items already largely in place, as ODE has comprehensive Social Sciences Standards that are routinely updated, including K-12 civics education. In 2017, Oregon passed HB 2845, requiring the integration of ethnic studies into social science standards. The goal of these new standards is to better represent the history, contributions, and perspectives of traditionally underrepresented individuals and groups. The new 2021 draft document, [2021 Social Science Standards Integrated with Ethnic Studies](#), was released in January for comment and will go to the Oregon School Board for final approval later this year.

We urge this committee to ensure that [SB 683](#) does not duplicate standards established in previous sessions, reflected in the [2021 Social Science Standards: Ethnic Studies](#) (2017, HB 2845/ HB 2023), [Holocaust & Genocide](#) (2019, SB 664), [Tribal History/Shared History](#) (2017, SB 13). We would also like clarification on whether SB 702 duplicates or replaces the work of an existing task force. [SB 702](#) states *“The task force shall: review the social studies standards for kindergarten through grade 12, with an emphasis on civics education and making more accessible instruction related to: voting rights and how to vote; current and historical social movements; and the roles of local governments and tribal governments then make recommendations for any changes related to the social studies standards.”* However, an advisory group consisting of representatives from 13 ethnic and social groups convened from November 2017 to June 2019. The advisory group meetings culminated in the production of a recommendation of ethnic studies standards to be included as part of the social science K-12 standards. ODE also hosts a number of resources on the [Social Science Webpage](#), including a list of supplemental resources and helpful websites. We believe that SB 702 intent may already be in the 2021 Social Science Standards. However, if yet another task force is formed, the League of Women Voters would be happy to serve as the Governor’s appointed “voting rights advocate” in the process.

[SB 513](#) requires students to demonstrate proficiency in civics in order to receive a high school diploma. (Girod and Findley). A similar bill, [HB 2299](#) (Evans), also requires civics for graduation. LWVOR has studied required learning requirements from the Department of Education that guide district offerings in civics in elementary, junior high, and high school. We believe that adequate information already exists in

school curriculum without imposing another barrier to graduation. **We welcome separate optional civics classes but do not believe that a “civics test” should be a requirement for high school graduation, as is the case in the now hotly debated “Essential Learning Skills Test.”** Therefore, LWVOR OPPOSES both [SB 513](#) and [HB 2299](#).

We also offer comments on three other civics-related bills that are not before the committee today, as these may be germane to the discussion.

- [SB 26](#), not yet scheduled for a hearing, was filed at the request of previous Secretary of State Bev Clarno and requires that students in every grade from kindergarten through grade 12 receive at least half of semester, or equivalent of half of semester, of instruction in civics. It directs ODE to develop academic content standards, lesson plans, and other content material for classroom instruction, including the role of the federal, state, local and tribal governments and the importance of community involvement and civic engagement. Given that the Oregon Department of Education. (ODE) already has comprehensive Social Sciences Standards that are routinely updated, including civics education from K-12, and given that [SB 26](#) appears to duplicate already existing standards, the League does not support this bill.
- [SB 744](#), as mentioned previously, directs the Department of Education (ODE) to **review state requirements for a high school diploma** and considers removal of the “Essential Learning Skills Test” as a condition of earning a diploma, a barrier especially hard for special education students. We believe this bill is broad enough to establish rigor and accountability while taking equity, inclusion and career success into account.
- [SB 598](#) (Frederick) establishes subject-matter credit requirements that students must satisfy in order to receive a high school diploma with twenty-four total credits; three credits of mathematics; four credits of English; three credits of science; three credits of history, geography, economics or civics; one credit of health; one credit of physical education; and three credits of career and technical education, the arts or a world language, in any combination.

LWVOR supports both [SB 744](#) and [SB 598](#), as we believe they initiate a broad review of graduation requirements in light of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Oregon is not alone in discussing civics education standards and an updated curriculum for history and civics education. In fact, a [media release](#) just last week heralds an important [“Roadmap”](#) for [Educating for American Democracy](#) that may be yet another tool for Oregon’s skilled educators. We are pleased to see that a state guidance workgroup included Amit Kobrowski, K–12 Social Science Specialist from ODE.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss these various bills.



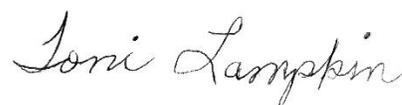
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