

**First Regular Session
Seventy-third General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

PREAMENDED

*This Unofficial Version Includes Committee
Amendments Not Yet Adopted on Second Reading*

LLS NO. 21-0392.01 Alana Rosen x2606

SENATE BILL 21-067

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Coram and Hansen, Priola

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

(None),

Senate Committees
Education

House Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN CIVICS EDUCATION IN**
102 **COLORADO.**

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)

The bill specifies information and issues that public schools must teach in providing courses on civil government. The bill directs the state board of education (state board) to review the state civics standards and update them as necessary to include the identified information and issues.

The bill creates the Colorado seal of civics excellence (seal) to recognize public schools and school districts that implement high-quality

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing statute.
Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.

civics education programs. A public school may apply to the department of education (department) to receive the seal. The department shall review the applications, and the state board shall award a seal to those applicants that the department finds to have achieved specified criteria. If at least 90% of public schools within a school district receive a seal in a single school year, the state board shall award a seal to the school district. The school performance report for a public school or school district that receives a seal must state that fact and include information describing the criteria for obtaining a seal. The general assembly, by tribute, shall publicly recognize the public schools and school districts that are awarded seals. Each public school and school district is encouraged to partner with local service organizations to solicit donations to improve the quality of the civics education program that the public school or school district provides.

The bill authorizes a school district, charter school, or board of cooperative services that operates a public school (local education provider) to grant a diploma endorsement in civics literacy to a graduating high school student who meets specified requirements. A granting local education provider must provide information concerning the civics literacy diploma endorsement requirements to students and their parents.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly
3 finds that:

4 (a) The founders of the United States understood the importance
5 of education in ensuring the effectiveness and continuation of the
6 democratic government they created. As Thomas Jefferson is often
7 quoted as stating, "An educated citizenry is a vital requisite for our
8 survival as a free people".

9 (b) To be active, knowledgeable participants in democracy,
10 citizens must understand the mechanisms of the local, state, and federal
11 governments that are available to them to address the issues and
12 challenges of society and how to effectively participate in and influence
13 these mechanisms;

14 (c) With the passage of federal laws requiring statewide

1 assessments in English, mathematics, and science, there has been a
2 demonstrable disinvestment in civics education. Schools and school
3 districts have been pressured to focus their resources on teaching these
4 spotlight subjects and have devoted fewer resources and significantly less
5 time to teaching students the fundamentals of government and democracy
6 at the federal, state, and local government levels, providing students
7 fewer opportunities to engage in meaningful, project-based learning
8 activities centered on civics education.

9 (d) This disinvestment has led to a significant erosion in the
10 infrastructure in schools needed to support strong civics education
11 programs. The results are borne out by students' scores on the most recent
12 national civics assessment test. Less than a quarter of high school students
13 achieved a grade of proficient; minority students from low-income
14 households performed significantly worse on the test than their white,
15 middle-class peers.

16 (e) There are also declines in the civic knowledge of the adult
17 population of the United States. A 2016 survey found that only twenty-six
18 percent of Americans can name all three branches of government.

19 (f) To reverse this trend, schools and school districts must be
20 encouraged to review and reinvigorate their civics education curricula.
21 Civics education must include not only classroom instruction and
22 discussion of the fundamentals of American democracy at the federal,
23 state, and local government levels, but it must also include classroom
24 activities through which students model democratic processes and engage
25 in service learning and experiential project-based learning by
26 participating civically in their communities.

27 (g) Thorough and effective instruction in civics must include:

1 (I) Civic knowledge, meaning an understanding of the history and
2 heritage of the nation, civic life, and the functions of civic institutions;

3 (II) Civic skills, meaning the ability to analyze text and determine
4 the reliability of sources and to gain an understanding of the ways in
5 which civic institutions operate and how individuals may be involved in
6 civic life;

7 (III) Civic dispositions, meaning values such as appreciating free
8 speech and civil discourse and understanding perspectives that differ from
9 one's own, as well as a disposition to be civically engaged; and

10 (IV) Civic behaviors, meaning civic and political habits and
11 behaviors, including voting, engaging in deliberative discussions,
12 volunteering, attending public meetings, and other activities related to
13 civic life.

14 (2) The general assembly finds, therefore, that it is necessary to
15 encourage more rigorous, thorough, and effective civics education by
16 establishing the Colorado seal of civics excellence to be awarded to
17 public schools and school districts that demonstrate high-quality civics
18 education programs that prepare students for professional and civic life.

19 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-1-104, **amend** (1)
20 as follows:

21 **22-1-104. Teaching of history, culture, and civil government.**

22 (1) (a) The history and civil government of the United States and of the
23 state of Colorado, which includes the history, culture, and social
24 contributions of minorities, including but not limited to American
25 Indians, Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans, the lesbian,
26 gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals within these minority groups,
27 and the intersectionality of significant social and cultural features within

1 these communities, and the contributions and persecution of religious
2 minorities, must be taught in all the public schools of the state.

3 (b) IN ADDITION TO THE REQUIREMENTS SPECIFIED IN SUBSECTION
4 (1)(a) OF THIS SECTION, COURSES FOR TEACHING THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT
5 OF THE UNITED STATES AND OF THE STATE OF COLORADO MUST INCLUDE
6 INSTRUCTION ON:

7 (I) THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT AND HOW THEY
8 INTERACT; AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW LAWS ARE ENACTED AT THE
9 FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVELS; AND THE METHODS
10 BY WHICH CITIZENS SHAPE AND INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT AND
11 GOVERNMENTAL ACTIONS;

12 (II) THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF
13 THE UNITED STATES AND THE STATE OF COLORADO USING FEDERAL AND
14 STATE FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS AND THE SIGNIFICANCE AND
15 RELEVANCE OF THOSE FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS IN MODERN SOCIETY.
16 AT A MINIMUM, THIS INSTRUCTION MUST INCLUDE:

17 (A) THE HISTORICAL AND MODERN SIGNIFICANCE OF THE
18 DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE;

19 (B) HOW THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION ESTABLISHES THE
20 FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REPUBLIC
21 THAT IT CREATES;

22 (C) HOW THE COLORADO CONSTITUTION ESTABLISHES THE STATE
23 GOVERNMENT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE
24 STATE;

25 (D) HOW THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION WITH THE BILL OF
26 RIGHTS AND THE STATE BILL OF RIGHTS IN ARTICLE II OF THE STATE
27 CONSTITUTION ARE APPLICABLE IN MODERN SOCIETY;

1 (E) HOW THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION IS AMENDED AND
2 THE CHANGES THAT HAVE BEEN MADE TO IT SINCE 1787;

3 (F) HOW THE COLORADO CONSTITUTION IS AMENDED AND THE
4 CHANGES THAT HAVE BEEN MADE TO IT SINCE 1876; AND

5 (G) HOW OTHER FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS OF THE UNITED
6 STATES AND COLORADO, INCLUDING LANDMARK UNITED STATES
7 SUPREME COURT DECISIONS AND SIGNIFICANT COLORADO SUPREME COURT
8 DECISIONS, AIDED IN THE FORMATION AND HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY
9 AFFECTED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND COLORADO
10 GOVERNMENTS.

11 (c) NOTWITHSTANDING THE REQUIREMENT IN SECTION 22-7-1005
12 (6) TO REVIEW THE PRESCHOOL THROUGH ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
13 EDUCATION STANDARDS EVERY SIX YEARS, AS SOON AS IS PRACTICABLE
14 AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS SUBSECTION (1)(c), THE STATE BOARD
15 OF EDUCATION SHALL REVIEW THE CIVICS PORTION OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES
16 STANDARDS AND REVISE THEM AS NECESSARY TO COMPLY WITH THE
17 REQUIREMENTS OF SUBSECTION (1)(b) OF THIS SECTION. THE STATE BOARD
18 OF EDUCATION SHALL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION ANY
19 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HISTORY, CULTURE, SOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS,
20 AND CIVIL GOVERNMENT IN EDUCATION COMMISSION ESTABLISHED IN
21 SECTION 22-1-104.3 IN REVIEWING THE CIVICS STANDARDS PURSUANT TO
22 THIS SUBSECTION (1)(c).

23 (d) EACH PUBLIC SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DISTRICT IS ENCOURAGED
24 TO PARTNER WITH LOCAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS TO SOLICIT DONATIONS
25 TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM THAT THE
26 PUBLIC SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT PROVIDES. DONATIONS MAY BE USED
27 TO PAY THE COST OF DEVELOPING A HIGH-QUALITY CURRICULUM, INVITING

1 SPEAKERS TO INTERACT WITH STUDENTS, AND PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH
2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVICS LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT OUTSIDE OF THE
3 CLASSROOM.

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5 **SECTION 3. Safety clause.** The general assembly hereby finds,
6 determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate
7 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety.