



Legislative Council Staff

Research Note

Version: Final

Date: 4/26/2016

Bill Number

Senate Bill 16-148

Sponsors

***Senator Hill
Representatives Moreno and
Lundeen***

Short Title

***Require Civics Test Before
Graduate High School***

Research Analyst

Rachel Kurtz-Phelan (x3028)

Status

This research note reflects the final version of the bill. The bill was postponed indefinitely by the Senate on April 6, 2016.

Summary

This bill requires that high school students correctly answer at least 60 questions from the civics portion of the naturalization test used by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as a condition of high school graduation.

Local education providers (LEPs), which include school districts, charter schools, and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services, may allow a student to take the test in whole or in part on multiple occasions while enrolled in high school and if necessary, to repeat the test until the student correctly answers at least 60 questions. The LEP is required to note successful completion of the test on the student's transcript. Each LEP has authority and flexibility in determining how to administer the test. An LEP may not use the results of the civics test as a measure of student academic growth for use in evaluating educators.

Students receiving special education services are exempt from the requirement to obtain a passing score unless the student's individualized education plan would require it. The superintendent or principal of an LEP may also waive the requirement for a student who meets all other graduation requirements, and demonstrates extraordinary circumstances that justify the waiver.

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Background

Under current law, each high school student must satisfactorily complete a civics course as a condition of high school graduation. The course must cover the history and civil government of the United States, which includes the history, culture, and contributions of minorities.

Senate Action

Senate Education Committee (March 30 and March 31, 2016). At the hearing, representatives from the Joe Foss Institute, Center for American Values, Independence Institute, and the Civics Education Initiative testified in support of the bill. Representatives from two school districts, the Colorado Education Association, Colorado Association of School Boards, Colorado Council for the Social Studies, Colorado Council for Economic Education, Colorado We the People Program, and three private citizens testified in opposition to the bill. The committee adopted amendments L.001 and L.014 and referred the bill, as amended, to the Senate Committee of the Whole. Amendment L.001 clarified what constitutes the civics portion of the naturalization test. Amendment L.014 prohibited a school district, charter school, or public school operated by a Board of Cooperative Educational Services from using the results of the test as a measure of performance in determining school district accreditation or public school performance.

Senate second reading (April 5, 2016). The Senate adopted the Senate Education Committee report and passed the bill with no amendments.

Senate third reading (April 6, 2016). The bill was lost on third reading.