
Education Committee

HB 2132

Brief Description: Regarding instruction in civics.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Anderson, Carlyle, Dammeier, Probst, Sullivan and Johnson.

Brief Summary of Bill

- States that the purpose of a high school diploma is to declare that a student is ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship, and is equipped with the skills to be a lifelong learner.
- Requires that if the State Board of Education increases graduation requirements in Social Studies, at least one-half credit of the requirement must be in civics.

Hearing Date: 2/13/09

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383)

Background:

The State Board of Education (SBE) is charged with adopting minimum high school graduation requirements. In 2006, the Legislature directed the SBE to define the purpose of a meaningful high school diploma. Part of the SBE's definition was that a diploma should "declare that a student is ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship, and is equipped with the skills to be a lifelong learner." As part of its work, the SBE also recommended increasing high school graduation requirements from 19 to 24 credits. The SBE is continuing work on this proposal, and it has not yet been adopted.

One aspect of the recommendation is to increase requirements in Social Studies from 2.5 to 3.0 credits. The current Social Studies requirement is as follows:

- one credit in United States history and government, including study of the Constitution;
- one credit in contemporary world history, geography, and problems; and
- one-half credit in Washington State history and government, including study of the State Constitution.

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.

The Social Studies credits are also expected to align with the state Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) in civics, economics, geography, and history. Beginning in the 2008-09 school year, school districts must require students in 11th or 12th grade to complete a classroom-based assessment in civics.

Summary of Bill:

The purpose of a high school diploma is to declare that a student is ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship, and is equipped with the skills to be a lifelong learner. If, after the effective date of the bill, the SBE increases the number of Social Studies credits required for high school graduation, at least one-half credit must be coursework in civics. The content of the civics requirement includes federal, state, and local government organization and procedures; rights and responsibilities of citizens addressed in the state and federal Constitutions; current issues addressed at each level of government; and electoral issues.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.