

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5637

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As of February 10, 2025

**Title:** An act relating to promoting student access to information about media literacy and civic education.

**Brief Description:** Promoting student access to information about media literacy and civic education.

**Sponsors:** Senator Fortunato.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/11/25.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Adds required content about civics and media literacy to the mandatory high school civics course.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Staff:** Elena Becker (786-7493)

**Background:** Civic Education. Under state law, high schools must provide a mandatory course in civics for each high school student. The content of this course must include, but is not limited to:

- federal, state, tribal, and local government organization and procedures;
- rights and responsibilities of citizens under the state and federal constitutions;
- current issues addressed at each level of government;
- electoral issues such as elections, ballot measures, initiatives, and referenda;
- the study and completion of the civics component of the federally administered naturalization test; and
- the importance in a free society of living basic values and character traits such as diligence, integrity, and personal responsibility.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Summary of Bill:** The mandatory civics course curricular requirements are expanded to include content related to:

- the process of voter registration;
- checks and balances between the branches of government;
- media literacy, including how to combat the digital spread of misinformation;
- tools and methods for initiating change in public policy and institutions; and
- factors that influence political participation and representation, such as redistricting, gerrymandering, and reapportionment.

"Media literacy" is defined as the ability to decode media messages; assess the influence of media messages on thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; and access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication.

By September 1, 2025, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is directed to collaborate with nonprofits to identify and make available materials relating to medial literacy, political participation, and institutional change. These materials may be used by school districts to meet these requirements, and OSPI is directed to review the materials at least every five years.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 6, 2025.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.