

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

INTRODUCED

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 **SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 22-1-104.1 as
24 follows:

25 **22-1-104.1. Colorado seal of civics excellence - established -**
26 **criteria - rules - definitions.** (1) AS USED IN THIS SECTION, UNLESS THE
27 CONTEXT OTHERWISE REQUIRES:

1 (a) "COMMISSION" MEANS THE HISTORY, CULTURE, SOCIAL
2 CONTRIBUTIONS, AND CIVIL GOVERNMENT IN EDUCATION COMMISSION
3 ESTABLISHED IN SECTION 22-1-104.3.

4 (b) "DEPARTMENT" MEANS THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
5 CREATED AND EXISTING PURSUANT TO SECTION 24-1-115.

6 (c) "PROJECT-BASED" MEANS AN APPROACH THAT ENGAGES
7 STUDENTS IN LEARNING ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS THROUGH A
8 STUDENT-INFLUENCED INQUIRY PROCESS STRUCTURED AROUND COMPLEX,
9 AUTHENTIC QUESTIONS AND CAREFULLY DESIGNED PROJECTS AND TASKS.

10 (d) "SEAL" MEANS THE COLORADO SEAL OF CIVICS EXCELLENCE
11 ESTABLISHED IN SUBSECTION (2) OF THIS SECTION.

12 (e) "SERVICE LEARNING" MEANS LEARNING THAT ACTIVELY
13 INVOLVES STUDENTS IN ONE OR MORE OF A WIDE RANGE OF EXPERIENCES
14 THAT BENEFIT OTHERS AND THE COMMUNITY AND ADVANCE THE
15 LEARNING GOALS OF CIVICS EDUCATION.

16 (f) "STATE BOARD" MEANS THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
17 CREATED AND EXISTING PURSUANT TO SECTION 1 OF ARTICLE IX OF THE
18 STATE CONSTITUTION.

19 (2) THERE IS ESTABLISHED THE COLORADO SEAL OF CIVICS
20 EXCELLENCE TO RECOGNIZE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS
21 THAT IMPLEMENT HIGH-QUALITY CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAMS THAT
22 PREPARE STUDENTS FOR PROFESSIONAL AND CIVIC LIFE. TO RECEIVE A
23 SEAL, A PUBLIC SCHOOL MUST APPLY TO THE DEPARTMENT. THE
24 DEPARTMENT SHALL REVIEW EACH APPLICATION, AND THE STATE BOARD
25 SHALL AWARD A SEAL TO EACH APPLICANT THAT THE DEPARTMENT FINDS
26 TO HAVE ACHIEVED THE CRITERIA ADOPTED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (4)
27 OF THIS SECTION. IF AT LEAST NINETY PERCENT OF THE SCHOOLS OF A

1 SCHOOL DISTRICT RECEIVE A SEAL IN A SINGLE ACADEMIC YEAR, THE
2 STATE BOARD SHALL AWARD A SEAL TO THE SCHOOL DISTRICT. THE STATE
3 BOARD SHALL ADOPT RULES AS NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THIS SECTION.

4 (3) (a) IF A PUBLIC SCHOOL OR A SCHOOL DISTRICT IS AWARDED A
5 SEAL, THE PERFORMANCE REPORT DESCRIBED IN SECTION 22-11-503 FOR
6 THE PUBLIC SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT MUST SPECIFY THAT THE PUBLIC
7 SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT RECEIVED THE SEAL AND INCLUDE
8 INFORMATION DESCRIBING THE CRITERIA FOR RECEIVING THE SEAL.

9 (b) DURING EACH REGULAR LEGISLATIVE SESSION, THE GENERAL
10 ASSEMBLY SHALL PUBLICLY RECOGNIZE THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL
11 DISTRICTS THAT RECEIVED A SEAL FOR THE PRECEDING SCHOOL YEAR. THE
12 GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHALL PRESENT EACH PUBLIC SCHOOL AND EACH
13 SCHOOL DISTRICT WITH A TRIBUTE THAT RECOGNIZES THE PUBLIC
14 SCHOOL'S OR THE SCHOOL DISTRICT'S OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN
15 OBTAINING THE SEAL.

16 (4) THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION SHALL WORK WITH THE
17 COMMISSION TO DEVELOP, AND THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION BY RULE
18 SHALL ADOPT, THE CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING WHETHER A PUBLIC
19 SCHOOL QUALIFIES FOR A SEAL. A PUBLIC SCHOOL MUST MEET AT LEAST
20 SIX OF THE CRITERIA SPECIFIED IN THIS SUBSECTION (4) OR BY RULE TO
21 QUALIFY FOR A SEAL. AT A MINIMUM, THE CRITERIA INCLUDE REQUIRING
22 A PUBLIC SCHOOL TO:

23 (a) INCORPORATE CIVICS LEARNING ACROSS A BROAD RANGE OF
24 GRADES AND ACADEMIC SUBJECTS THAT BUILD ON THE CIVICS PORTION OF
25 THE STATE SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS;

26 (b) PROVIDE INSTRUCTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION
27 22-1-104 (1)(b) CONCERNING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES;

1 THE SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AND INDIVIDUALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
2 CREATION OF THE FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS OF THE COUNTRY AND THE
3 STATE; AND THE FORMATION OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE UNITED
4 STATES AND THE STATE OF COLORADO USING, AT A MINIMUM, FEDERAL
5 AND STATE FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS;

6 (c) PROVIDE INSTRUCTION IN NEWS MEDIA LITERACY;

7 (d) IMPLEMENT A HIGH-QUALITY, PROJECT-BASED ASSESSMENT IN
8 CIVICS AT LEAST TWICE IN GRADES FOUR THROUGH EIGHT AND AT LEAST
9 ONCE IN GRADES NINE THROUGH TWELVE, AS APPLICABLE TO THE GRADE
10 LEVELS THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SERVES. THE PUBLIC SCHOOL, IN
11 COLLABORATION WITH ITS SCHOOL DISTRICT OR AN APPROPRIATE
12 NONPUBLIC ENTITY, MUST DEVELOP THE ASSESSMENT AND MUST DESIGN
13 THE ASSESSMENT TO MEASURE THE CIVICS LEARNING OBJECTIVES
14 DESCRIBED IN SECTION 22-1-104 (1)(b) AND IN THE CIVICS PORTION OF THE
15 STATE SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS. AT A MINIMUM, THE ASSESSMENT
16 MUST BE DESIGNED TO DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLIC POLICY;
17 THE STRUCTURE OF FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS; AND THE
18 UNITED STATES AND COLORADO CONSTITUTIONS.

19 (e) PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO ENGAGE IN
20 REAL-WORLD LEARNING ACTIVITIES, WHICH MAY INCLUDE MOCK
21 ELECTIONS OR OTHER SIMULATIONS OF DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES AND
22 PROCEDURES;

23 (f) REQUIRE STUDENTS TO ENGAGE IN SERVICE LEARNING
24 OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS ISSUES WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES;

25 (g) PARTNER WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OR SERVICE CLUBS OR
26 OTHER CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY TO PROVIDE
27 OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERNSHIPS,

1 APPRENTICESHIPS, OR OTHER CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES OUTSIDE
2 OF THE CLASSROOM;

3 (h) PARTNER WITH HISTORY COLORADO AND ITS AFFILIATED
4 ORGANIZATIONS TO ENGAGE IN SERVICE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES OR
5 INCORPORATE PROGRAMS CREATED BY HISTORY COLORADO THAT CAN BE
6 ACCESSED REMOTELY; AND

7 (i) PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF STUDENT LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT
8 IN CIVICS, WHICH MAY INCLUDE STUDENT PORTFOLIOS, STUDENT
9 DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS, AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ON THE
10 PROJECT-BASED ASSESSMENT DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION (4)(d) OF THIS
11 SECTION.

12 (5) EACH PUBLIC SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DISTRICT IS ENCOURAGED
13 TO PARTNER WITH LOCAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS TO SOLICIT DONATIONS
14 TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM THAT THE
15 PUBLIC SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT PROVIDES. DONATIONS MAY BE USED
16 TO PAY THE COST OF DEVELOPING A HIGH-QUALITY CURRICULUM, INVITING
17 SPEAKERS TO INTERACT WITH STUDENTS, AND PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH
18 OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVICS LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT OUTSIDE OF THE
19 CLASSROOM.

20 **SECTION 4.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add 22-7-1009.7** as
21 follows:

22 **22-7-1009.7. Diploma endorsement - civics literacy -**
23 **definitions.** (1) AS USED IN THIS SECTION, UNLESS THE CONTEXT
24 OTHERWISE REQUIRES:

25 (a) "ADVANCED PLACEMENT TEST" MEANS THE FINAL TEST
26 ADMINISTERED AT THE COMPLETION OF A COURSE THAT DELIVERS A
27 COLLEGE-LEVEL CURRICULUM IN UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND

1 POLITICS AND THAT MAY RESULT IN THE AWARDING OF COLLEGE CREDIT
2 BASED ON THE SCORE ACHIEVED ON THE FINAL TEST.

3 (b) "PROJECT-BASED" MEANS AN APPROACH THAT ENGAGES
4 STUDENTS IN LEARNING ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS THROUGH A
5 STUDENT-INFLUENCED INQUIRY PROCESS STRUCTURED AROUND COMPLEX,
6 AUTHENTIC QUESTIONS AND CAREFULLY DESIGNED PROJECTS AND TASKS.

7 (c) "SERVICE LEARNING" MEANS LEARNING THAT ACTIVELY
8 INVOLVES STUDENTS IN ONE OR MORE OF A WIDE RANGE OF EXPERIENCES
9 THAT BENEFIT OTHERS AND THE COMMUNITY AND ADVANCE THE
10 LEARNING GOALS OF CIVICS EDUCATION.

11 (2) A LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER MAY GRANT A DIPLOMA
12 ENDORSEMENT IN CIVICS LITERACY TO A GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL
13 STUDENT WHO:

14 (a) COMPLETES ALL OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES COURSE
15 REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL WITH AN OVERALL
16 GRADE POINT AVERAGE OF AT LEAST 3.5;

17 (b) IF OFFERED BY THE LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER FROM WHICH
18 THE STUDENT GRADUATES, PASSES THE ADVANCED PLACEMENT TEST IN
19 UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS WITH A SCORE OF FOUR OR
20 HIGHER;

21 (c) AFTER COMPLETING SIXTH GRADE, COMPLETES ONE OR MORE
22 SERVICE LEARNING PROJECTS WITHIN THE STUDENT'S COMMUNITY;

23 (d) (I) PARTICIPATES IN ONE OR MORE SIMULATIONS OF
24 DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES WITHIN OR OUTSIDE OF THE
25 CLASSROOM;

26 (II) SERVES AT LEAST ONE FULL TERM ON THE YOUTH ADVISORY
27 COUNCIL CREATED IN PART 13 OF ARTICLE 2 OF TITLE 2; OR

1 (III) PARTICIPATES FOR ONE YEAR IN THE COLORADO STUDENT
2 LEADERS INSTITUTE CREATED IN ARTICLE 77 OF TITLE 23; AND

3 (e) COMPLETES A CAPSTONE PROJECT IN CIVICS THAT IS
4 PROJECT-BASED AND EXPERIENTIAL, AND ADDRESSES ONE OR MORE ISSUES
5 WITHIN THE STUDENT'S COMMUNITY.

6 (3) EACH GRANTING LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER SHALL
7 ANNUALLY PROVIDE TO STUDENTS ENROLLED IN GRADES SIX THROUGH
8 TWELVE AND THEIR PARENTS INFORMATION CONCERNING THE
9 REQUIREMENTS FOR OBTAINING THE CIVICS LITERACY ENDORSEMENT.

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