

HCS HBS 578, 574, & 584 -- CIVICS EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Swan

COMMITTEE ACTIONS: Voted "Do Pass with Amendments" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 11 to 1. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on Education by a vote of 7 to 2.

This bill repeals the provisions requiring every high school student in any public or private school except private trade schools to satisfactorily pass an examination on the provisions and principles of the United States Constitution and the Missouri Constitution and in American history and American institutions in order to receive a certificate of graduation.

The bill establishes the Missouri Civics Education Initiative that requires, beginning January 1, 2016, every high school student attending any public, charter, or private school except private trade schools or a student seeking to complete a high school equivalency certificate to, as a condition of high school graduation or its equivalent, take and receive a passing grade on a basic civics test similar to the civics portion of the United States Naturalization test, produced by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The test must use questions from the USCIS test, but the school may choose how many questions it chooses to administer on the examination. Students must answer at least 60% of those questions correctly to pass.

Schools may require a passing score on an exam on the provisions and principles of the United States Constitution, the Missouri Constitution, or both.

Each school district must adopt a policy to permit the waiver of the requirements in these provisions for a student with a disability if it is recommended by the student's IEP committee.

PROPONENTS: Supporters of HB 578, HB 574, & HB 584 say that Missouri students are suffering from a drastic diminishment of civic knowledge and that knowledge is vital.

Testifying for HB 578, HB 574, & HB 584 were Representatives Swan, Haahr, and LaFaver; Bryan Sanders; Missouri Chamber Of Commerce; Missouri Education Reform Council; Katherine Casas, Children's Education Council of Missouri; Missouri Biotechnology Association; Glen Klippenster; Sandy Diamond; and Tony Feather.

OPPONENTS: Those opposing HB 578, HB 574, & HB 584 are concerned about repealing the requirement for a test on the Missouri

Constitution and replacing locally developed tests.

Testifying against HB 578, HB 574, and HB 584 were Russel Sackreiter; Missouri National Education Association; and Missouri State Teachers Association.

OTHERS: Others testifying on HB 578, HB 574, & HB 584 wanted to include language for students with individualized learning programs and home school students.

Testifying for informational purposes on HB 578, HB 574, & HB 584 was Missouri Association of School Administrators.