

HCS HB 1646 -- CIVICS EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Swan

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with Amendments" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 13 to 0. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on Education by a vote of 9 to 0.

A student of a college or university, who, after earning a passing grade in a course of instruction for United States or Missouri history or constitution, transfers to another college or university, is not required to earn a passing grade in another such course as a condition precedent to graduation.

The bill repeals the prohibition on students receiving a certificate of graduation without having satisfactorily passed an examination on the provisions and principles of the United States and Missouri constitutions, American history, and American institutions. However, to receive a certificate of graduation, public or private schools other than private trade schools may require a passing score on an examination of the provisions and principles of the United States Constitution, Missouri Constitution, or both.

This bill creates the Missouri Civics Education Initiative. Any student entering ninth grade after July 1, 2017, who is attending a public, charter, or private school, except for private trade schools, must, as a condition of high school graduation take and pass an American civics test similar to the civics portion of the United States Naturalization test, produced by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

The bill allows the school district to administer the test on American civics in conjunction with testing on the provisions and principles of the United States and Missouri constitutions, American history, and American institutions. The school district may use an on-line test to comply with these provisions.

Each district must adopt a policy permitting a student with a disability to receive a waiver from this requirement, if recommended by the student's IEP committee.

This bill is similar to HB 578 (2015) and the same as HB 2132 and 1621 (2016).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that every student should learn about American civics and that certain studies have shown the current student population lacks knowledge on American civics. Students

should have a basic level of knowledge about American civics in order to participate in the political process.

Proponents voiced their favor and points of agreement in context of the bill's forthcoming amendment language.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Haahr; Connections Academy; Missouri Chamber Of Commerce And Industry; and Missouri School Boards Association.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say students, teachers, and parents aren't gaining anything from the bill and are, perhaps, losing something due to the subjective nature of the target answers. We should take a more in depth look at the situation and give our students "something to chew at."

Testifying on the bill was Concerned Women For America of Missouri.