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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair  
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

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### **AB 1552 (Jackson) - Public postsecondary education: civic engagement: recommendations report**

**Version:** March 19, 2026

**Urgency:** No

**Hearing Date:** June 29, 2026

**Policy Vote:** ED. 6 - 0

**Mandate:** No

**Consultant:** Lenin Del Castillo

**Bill Summary:** This bill requires the California State University (CSU) and the California Community Colleges (CCCs), and requests the University of California (UC), to make recommendations to the Legislature on how to facilitate greater knowledge of American democracy and meaningful civic engagement opportunities for students.

#### **Fiscal Impact:**

- The CSU anticipates the one-time costs approximately \$50,000 to produce the report, which consists of staff time at the CSU Chancellor's Office staff as well as the paid hours and incidental costs that would be covered for faculty to participate outside of their instruction hours.
- The UC estimates one-time General Fund staffing costs of \$40,000 at the UC Office of the President and faculty from the Academic Senate to comply with the bill's requirements.
- The Chancellor's Office estimates one-time General Fund workload costs of up to \$60,000 to produce the legislative report. To develop the required recommendations, the Chancellor's Office would need to convene meetings with college curriculum chairs, administer systemwide surveys, and synthesize input from faculty partners.
- While the bill does not require institutions to implement specific policies, modify curriculum, or establish new programs, it could potentially result in cost pressures for the segments to implement the recommendations that are included in the report to strengthen civic engagement and democratic participation among students.

**Background:** Existing law states the intent of the Legislature that public institutions of higher education in California will provide a collegiate experience which gives each student the skills of communication and problem solving, the ideas and principles underlying the major areas of modern knowledge, the ability to consider ethical issues thoughtfully, the understanding that learning is a continuous lifelong process, and the knowledge of democracy necessary for good citizenship.

Existing law requires that CSU students, in order to qualify for graduation, must pass comprehensive exams or complete coursework covering topics of American history and American government, including the historical development of American institutions and

ideals, the Constitution of the United States and the operation of representative democratic government under that Constitution, and the processes of state and local government.

**Proposed Law:** This bill requires the CSU Chancellor and the CCC Chancellor, and requests the UC President to, before the commencement of the 2028-academic year, in consultation with each of their respective academic senates, to report recommendations on how to facilitate greater knowledge of American democracy and meaningful civic engagement opportunities for students on campuses, and any necessary support from the Legislature to achieve those recommendations.

This bill states that the Legislature finds and declares that an essential element of public higher education is to build the knowledge of democracy necessary for good citizenship. It also states that it is the Legislature's intent that public institutions of higher education in California, when delivering courses that build the knowledge of democracy necessary for good citizenship, give consideration to the importance of civic engagement, civic discord, and the key components of preserving democracy and its vital institutions, including but not limited to, the free press, free access to libraries, compulsory education, and the federalist system.

The bill's provisions would sunset on January 1, 2033.

**Staff Comments:** This bill requires the CSU, CCC, and requests the UC, to produce a report for the Legislature with recommendations for how to facilitate greater knowledge of American democracy and meaningful civic engagement opportunities for students. The bill identifies several examples of democratic institutions, including the free press, free access to libraries, compulsory education, and the federalist system. According to the author, "Californians are struggling to participate in civil discourse, resulting in a need for improved education in civic engagement, civic discord, and the key components of preserving democracy and its vital institutions...the natural guardians of our democracy are the citizens themselves. As polarization deepens across the country, Californians must be better prepared to engage with one another respectfully and thoughtfully. Our goal shouldn't only be to prepare students for the workforce, but to cultivate informed, engaged citizens who help sustain our democracy."

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