

THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1552
Author: Jackson (D)
Amended: 3/19/26 in Assembly
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 6-0, 6/17/26
AYES: Pérez, Ochoa Bogh, Cabaldon, Cortese, Gonzalez, Reyes
NO VOTE RECORDED: Choi

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 6-0, 8/13/26
AYES: Cervantes, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab
NO VOTE RECORDED: Seyarto

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 67-4, 5/22/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Public postsecondary education: civic engagement:
recommendations report

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill requires the California State University (CSU) and the California Community Colleges (CCC), and requests the University of California (UC), before the 2028–29 academic year, to make recommendations to the Legislature on how to facilitate greater knowledge of American democracy and meaningful civic engagement opportunities for students, including necessary support from the Legislature to achieve such recommendations.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the UC as a public trust to be administered by the Regents of the UC; and, grants the Regents full powers of organization and government, subject only to such legislative control as may be necessary to insure security of its funds, compliance with the terms of its endowments, statutory requirements

around competitive bidding and contracts, sales of property and the purchase of materials, goods and services. (California Constitution Article IX, § (9)(a))

- 2) Confers upon the CSU Trustees the powers, duties, and functions with respect to the management, administration, and control of the CSU system and provides that the Trustees are responsible for the rule of government of their appointees and employees. (Education Code (EC) §§ 66606 and 89500, et seq.)
- 3) Establishes the CCC under the administration of the Board of Governors of the CCC, as one of the segments of public postsecondary education in this state, and specifies that the CCC is comprised of community college districts. (EC § 70900)
- 4) 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. (EC § 66050)
- 5) 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. (California Code of Regulations Title V § 40404)

This bill:

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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.

- 3) 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, report to the Legislature, as specified, 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.
- 4) Sunsets this bill's provisions on January 1, 2033.

Comments

Need for the bill. 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."

Existing legislative intent regarding civic education. Current law expresses the Legislature's intent that public institutions of higher education provide students with the knowledge of democracy necessary for good citizenship. This bill goes further by requiring recommendations from the segments regarding civic engagement and civic knowledge. This 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, recent surveys indicate that many Americans lack basic knowledge regarding democratic institutions and constitutional rights, highlighting the importance of civic education and civic engagement opportunities. This bill seeks to encourage heightened responsibility in supporting those objectives.

Recommendations to the Legislature. A prior version of this bill required a review and modification of courses. It was significantly amended in the Assembly Higher Education Committee into its current version, making findings and declarations related to the role higher education plays in facilitating good citizenship. This bill requires CSU and CCC and requests UC to report recommendations on facilitating greater knowledge of American democracy and meaningful civic engagement

opportunities, including any support needed from the Legislature to implement those recommendations. The report must also identify any legislative support necessary to implement those recommendations and be developed in consultation with the respective academic senates. It does not require institutions to implement specific policies, modify curriculum, or establish new programs. Instead, it seeks recommendations from the public higher education segments regarding potential strategies to strengthen civic engagement and democratic participation among students.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee analysis, this bill would have the following 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 this 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.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/14/26)

Alliance for a Better Community
Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California
BLU Educational Foundation
California Center for Civic Participation
California Teachers Association

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights
Delta Kappa Gamma International - Chi State
Equality California
GenUp
InnerCity Struggle
University of California Student Association
Young Invincibles

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/14/26)

Faculty Association of California Community Colleges

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: The California Teachers Association, in their letter of support submitted to this committee, states, “We want to acknowledge the changes made in the proposal, which our educators are completely in support. We believe, as amended, AB 1552 promotes the explicit instruction of democratic institutions, including the free press and civic discord, which directly fulfills CTA’s goals of teaching students the responsibilities of participation in a democratic society. We also believe the measure respects faculty purview by explicitly requiring any curriculum review, updates, or recommendations to the Legislature be done in consultation with the respective academic senates.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: The Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC), in their letter submitted to this committee, argue, “While FACCC shares the goal of ensuring that students develop a strong understanding of civic engagement and the principles of a healthy democracy, AB 1552 raises significant concerns regarding academic freedom and curriculum and instructional design. In the California community college system, these are the responsibility of the academic senate, and they are the subject matter experts that develop course content through established processes with the goal of academic rigor, disciplinary expertise, and responsiveness to student needs.”

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 67-4, 5/22/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio,

Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Valencia, Wallis,
Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NOES: Gallagher, Macedo, Patterson, Sanchez

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Castillo, Chen, Gabriel, Hoover, Lackey,
Celeste Rodriguez, Ta, Tangipa

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