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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair  
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

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### AB 422 (Jackson) - State Seal of Civic Engagement

**Version:** April 21, 2025

**Urgency:** No

**Hearing Date:** July 7, 2025

**Policy Vote:** ED. 7 - 0

**Mandate:** No

**Consultant:** Lenin Del Castillo

**Bill Summary:** This bill requires the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), at the next revision of the eligibility criteria for the State Seal of Civic Engagement, to recommend additional award criteria requiring students to show a demonstrated understanding of the importance of preserving democracy and its vital institutions, as specified.

**Fiscal Impact:** The California Department of Education (CDE) estimates one-time General Fund costs of \$355,000 to develop and recommend criteria revisions to the State Board of Education (SBE) upon the next revision of the State Seal of Civic Engagement criteria, while maintaining administration and oversight of the program.

**Background:** Existing law establishes the State Seal of Civic Engagement, affixed to the diploma or transcript of an eligible student, to encourage, and create pathways for, students in elementary and secondary schools to become civically engaged in democratic governmental institutions at the local, state, and national levels.

Existing law requires the SPI, in developing criteria for the State Seal of Civic Engagement, to incorporate the Six Proven Practices for Effective Civic Learning, and to consult with a diverse group of credentialed, current classroom teachers who teach the subject of history-social science, including government, in secondary schools. Requires the SPI to also consider including criteria based on each of the following:

- a) Successful completion of history, government, and civics courses, including courses that incorporate character education;
- b) Voluntary participation in community service or extracurricular activities; and
- c) Any other related requirements as deemed appropriate.

**Proposed Law:** This bill requires the SPI to recommend revised criteria to the SBE during its next revision of criteria the State Seal of Civic Engagement. The bill requires the revised criteria to include, along with meeting all other eligibility criteria for the award, a demonstrated understanding of the importance 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.

This bill requires the SPI to limit criteria recommendations to content that is not already included in the existing adopted criteria. It also requires the SBE to adopt, reject or

modify the additional criteria recommended by the SPI within one year of receiving of receiving them.

**Staff Comments:** To be eligible for a State Seal of Civic Engagement, students must demonstrate excellence in civics education and participation and an understanding of the United States Constitution, the California Constitution, and the democratic system of government. Specifically, students need to meet certain requirements such as being engaged in academic work in a productive way; demonstrating a competent understanding of the United States and California constitutions, functions and governance of local governments, tribal government structures and organizations, the role of the citizen in a constitutional democracy, and democratic principles, concepts, and processes; and participating in one or more informed civic engagement project(s) that address real-world problems and require students to identify and inquire into civic needs or problems, consider varied responses, take action, and reflect on efforts. Successful completion of the requirements is reflected by a seal affixed to student transcripts, diplomas, or certificates of completion.

This bill requires the SPI to recommend revised criteria to the SBE including a criteria for students to show a demonstrated understanding of the importance 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 also requires that the criteria recommended to the SBE be limited to those not already included in the previously established criteria.

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