

Date of Hearing: July 16, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 745 (Ochoa Bogh) – As Amended July 7, 2025

Policy Committee: Education

Vote: 8 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

**SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to enter into a contract with a county office of education (COE) or a consortium of COEs for the purpose of developing a curriculum guide for a one-year course in American government and civics. The bill also provides that a student's completion of the one-year course satisfies the applicable criterion for the State Seal of Civic Engagement (SSCE).

The bill requires the approval of the contract by the SBE and is subject to an appropriation.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

One-time General Fund costs of \$300,000 for the CDE over a two-year period to contract with a COE to develop the curriculum guide, and additional ongoing General Fund costs of \$355,000 annually for staffing and operating expenses. The development of the curriculum guide would be contingent upon an appropriation.

**COMMENTS:**

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Senate Bill 745 directs the California Department of Education to work with county offices to develop a curriculum guide and resources for a one-year course in American government and civics. Additionally, this bill requires school districts participating in the State Seal of Civic Engagement (SSCE) to deem the completion of a one-year course in American government and civics as satisfying a specified criteria for receiving the SSCE.

Currently, California only requires a one-semester course in American government and civics for high school graduation. This does not allow sufficient time to study state and local government processes. Inadequate civics education leads to a lower voter turnout, lack of advocacy, and diminished ability to discern incorrect information.

2) **Background. Civics Education and Graduation Requirements.** Current law requires high school students to take a one-semester course in American government and civics prior to high school graduation. A local educational agency (LEA) may also add other coursework

adopted by its governing board to the state high school graduation requirements, such as a one-year government and civics course.

***State Seal of Civic Engagement.*** The Legislature created the State Seal of Civic Engagement (SSCE), an award affixed to student transcripts, diplomas, or certificates of completion in recognition of a student's demonstrated excellence in civics education and participation, and an understanding of the United States Constitution, the California Constitution, and the democratic system of government. The intent of the seal is 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. The SBE established five criteria in 2020 that provide local educational agencies with a framework for making determinations of student qualifications required to earn the designation based on their local contexts. The criteria are to ensure that all students receive an opportunity to earn the SSCE based on academic ability, alternative school settings, or unique or unconventional expressions of civic engagement. One of the five criteria is the requirement that a student demonstrate a competent understanding of 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. According to the CDE, 345 schools participating in 110 school districts issued a total of 15,627 seals in the 2023-24 school year.

This bill requires a school district participating in the SSCE program to deem a student's completion of a one-year course in American government and civics as satisfying the specified criterion within the SSCE criteria related to demonstrating a competent understanding of United States and California constitutions; functions and governance of local governments, tribal government structures and organizations; the role of a citizen in a constitutional democracy, and democratic principles, concepts, and processes. However, the bill also states that this requirement shall not be construed to mean that a one-semester course is insufficient for the same purpose.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Aaron Heredia / APPR. / (916) 319-2081