

## RESOLUTION 10-06-2018

### DIGEST

Education: American Government and Civics Course to Include Instruction on Voting

Amends Education Code sections 51220 and 51225.3 to require additional instruction on national and state political systems as part of the existing civics curriculum.

### STATEMENT OF REASONS

The Problem: Even though political and civic involvement of our State's youth is vital for California's economic, social, and political health, it is severely lacking. In 2014 only 8.2% of California's eligible youth (ages 18–24) voted in the general election, and only 52% of California's youth were registered to vote. *California's 2014 Youth Vote Fact Sheet*, UC Davis Center for Regional Change, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57b8c7ce15d5dbf599fb46ab/t/580000df197aeafac45bc469/1476395232199/2014+Youth+Vote+Fact+Sheet.pdf>. A higher number of eligible youths voted in the 2016 general election (33.4% of registered youth voted, which accounted for only 7.5% of the state's total voters; 14.2% represents the youth share of the eligible voter population). *California's Youth Vote: June 2016 Primary Election*, UC Davis Center for Regional Change, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57b8c7ce15d5dbf599fb46ab/t/580e517fb8a79b0f917cda10/1477333377366/CCEPFS9+-+FINAL+%284%29.pdf>. With the exception of the 2016 general election, youth voter turnout declined 1.4% in each statewide primary election from 2004 through 2014. *Id.* A significant disparity continues to exist between the number of eligible voters, and the number of people who actually vote.

California's public school curriculum fails each student by not adequately preparing him or her to enter the nation's democracy through meaningful participation in elections at the municipal, county, state, and federal levels. Democracy requires participation. With historically low voter registration and turnout, we face a crisis of participation, which threatens the core tenets of our democracy. California's schools should help remedy that problem by teaching students about the history of voting rights, the importance of exercising those rights, how elections are structured, and how to vote.

While attending a California public high school, the author of this resolution drafted a bill in her 12<sup>th</sup> grade Civics class. The assignment was designed to engage students in a mock-legislative process. For her bill, this author drafted one in the same spirit as this resolution: that instruction on actual voting procedures, voter registration, and ballot format should be included in the high school curriculum. The need to promote fluency in the political systems of the nation and the state has remained poignant through time because the importance of voting will never diminish.

The Solution: This resolution will add a section to the California public school curriculum requiring the current one semester Civics course to include a section of instruction regarding the voting and electoral systems in the United States and California, in order to educate students on local, state-wide, and national issues, and teach them how eligible voters can register to vote. Including instruction on these subjects will raise awareness of local issues upon which young people can make an impact, foster civic involvement, and promote engaging conversations on controversial issues in an educational environment. It will teach students that they can debate controversial issues without animosity, which will foster a culture of learning to understand different perspectives. The proposed section will add language to Education Code section 51225.3: Requirements for graduation for students in grades 9 through 12, and add a corresponding section in Education Code section 51220: Areas of study; grades 7 to 12.

## TEXT OF RESOLUTION

**RESOLVED** that the Conference of California Bar Association recommends that legislation be sponsored to amend Education Code sections 51220 and 51225.3 to read as follows:

1 § 51220

2 The adopted course of study for grades 7 to 12, inclusive, shall offer courses in the following  
3 areas of study:

4 (a) English, including knowledge of and appreciation for literature, language, and composition,  
5 and the skills of reading, listening, and speaking.

6 (b)(1) Social sciences, drawing upon the disciplines of anthropology, economics, geography,  
7 history, political science, psychology, and sociology, designed to fit the maturity of the pupils.  
8 Instruction shall provide a foundation for understanding the history, resources, development,  
9 and government of California and the United States of America; instruction in our American legal and  
10 political systems, as required by Section 51225.3(D)(i) system, the operation of the juvenile and adult  
11 criminal justice systems, and the rights and duties of citizens under the criminal and civil law and the  
12 State and Federal Constitutions; the development of the American economic system, including the role  
13 of the entrepreneur and labor; the relations of persons to their human and natural environment; eastern  
14 and western cultures and civilizations; human rights issues, with particular attention to the study of the  
15 inhumanity of genocide, slavery, and the Holocaust, and contemporary issues.

16 (2) For purposes of this subdivision, genocide may include the Armenian Genocide. The  
17 “Armenian Genocide” means the torture, starvation, and murder of 1,500,000 Armenians, which  
18 included death marches into the Syrian desert, by the rulers of the Ottoman Turkish Empire and the  
19 exile of more than 500,000 innocent people during the period from 1915 to 1923, inclusive.

20 (c) Foreign language or languages, beginning not later than grade 7, designed to develop a  
21 facility for understanding, speaking, reading, and writing the particular language.

22 (d) Physical education, with emphasis given to physical activities that are conducive to health  
23 and to vigor of body and mind, as required by Section 51222.

24 (e) Science, including the physical and biological aspects, with emphasis on basic concepts,  
25 theories, and processes of scientific investigation and on the place of humans in ecological systems,  
26 and with appropriate applications of the interrelation and interdependence of the sciences.

27 (f) Mathematics, including instruction designed to develop mathematical understandings,  
28 operational skills, and insight into problem-solving procedures.

29 (g) Visual and performing arts, including dance, music, theater, and visual arts, with emphasis  
30 upon development of aesthetic appreciation and the skills of creative expression.

31 (h) Applied arts, including instruction in the areas of consumer and homemaking education,  
32 industrial arts, general business education, or general agriculture.

33 (i) Career technical education designed and conducted for the purpose of preparing youth for  
34 gainful employment in the occupations and in the numbers that are appropriate to the personnel needs  
35 of the state and the community served and relevant to the career desires and needs of the pupils.

36 (j) Automobile driver education, designed to develop a knowledge of the provisions of the  
37 Vehicle Code and other laws of this state relating to the operation of motor vehicles, a proper  
38 acceptance of personal responsibility in traffic, a true appreciation of the causes, seriousness, and  
39 consequences of traffic accidents, and to develop the knowledge and attitudes necessary for the safe  
40 operation of motor vehicles. A course in automobile driver education shall include education in the  
41 safe operation of motorcycles.

42 (k) Other studies as may be prescribed by the governing board.

44 § 51225.3

45 (a) A pupil shall complete all of the following while in grades 9 to 12, inclusive, in order to  
46 receive a diploma of graduation from high school:

47 (1) At least the following numbers of courses in the subjects specified, each course having a  
48 duration of one year, unless otherwise specified:

49 (A) Three courses in English.

50 (B) Two courses in mathematics. If the governing board of a school district requires more than  
51 two courses in mathematics for graduation, the governing board of the school district may award a  
52 pupil up to one mathematics course credit pursuant to Section 51225.35.

53 (C) Two courses in science, including biological and physical sciences.

54 (D) Three courses in social studies, including United States history and geography; world  
55 history, culture, and geography; a one-semester course in American government and civics; and a one-  
56 semester course in economics.

57 (i) For purposes of this subparagraph, “a one-semester course in American government and  
58 civics” shall include instruction on all the following:

59 (I) the history of voting rights and the importance of exercising voting rights;

60 (II) California and federal voting systems and elections;

61 (III) instruction on voter registration for eligible students; and

62 (IV) how to understand a ballot.

63 (E) One course in visual or performing arts, foreign language, or, commencing with the 2012-  
64 13 school year, career technical education.

65 (i) For purposes of satisfying the requirement specified in this subparagraph, a course in  
66 American Sign Language shall be deemed a course in foreign language.

67 (ii) For purposes of this subparagraph, “a course in career technical education” means a course  
68 in a district-operated career technical education program that is aligned to the career technical model  
69 curriculum standards and framework adopted by the state board, including courses through a regional  
70 occupational center or program operated by a county superintendent of schools or pursuant to a joint  
71 powers agreement.

72 (iii) This subparagraph does not require a school or school district that currently does not offer  
73 career technical education courses to start new career technical education programs for purposes of this  
74 section.

75 (iv) If a school district or county office of education elects to allow a career technical education  
76 course to satisfy the requirement imposed by this subparagraph, the governing board of the school  
77 district or county office of education, before offering that alternative to pupils, shall notify parents,  
78 teachers, pupils, and the public at a regularly scheduled meeting of the governing board of all of the  
79 following:

80 (I) The intent to offer career technical education courses to fulfill the graduation requirement  
81 specified in this subparagraph.

82 (II) The impact that offering career technical education courses, pursuant to this subparagraph,  
83 will have on the availability of courses that meet the eligibility requirements for admission to the  
84 California State University and the University of California, and whether the career technical education  
85 courses to be offered pursuant to this subparagraph are approved to satisfy those eligibility  
86 requirements. If a school district elects to allow a career technical education course to satisfy the  
87 requirement imposed by this subparagraph, the school district shall comply with subdivision (m) of  
88 Section 48980.

89 (III) The distinction, if any, between the high school graduation requirements of the school  
90 district or county office of education, and the eligibility requirements for admission to the California  
91 State University and the University of California.

92 (F) Two courses in physical education, unless the pupil has been exempted pursuant to the  
93 provisions of this code.

94 (2) Other coursework requirements adopted by the governing board of the school district.

95 (b) The governing board, with the active involvement of parents, administrators, teachers, and  
96 pupils, shall adopt alternative means for pupils to complete the prescribed course of study that may  
97 include practical demonstration of skills and competencies, supervised work experience or other  
98 outside school experience, career technical education classes offered in high schools, courses offered  
99 by regional occupational centers or programs, interdisciplinary study, independent study, and credit  
100 earned at a postsecondary educational institution. Requirements for graduation and specified  
101 alternative modes for completing the prescribed course of study shall be made available to pupils,  
102 parents, and the public.

103 (c) On or before July 1, 2017, the department shall submit a comprehensive report to the  
104 appropriate policy committees of the Legislature on the addition of career technical education courses  
105 to satisfy the requirement specified in subparagraph (E) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a), including,  
106 but not limited to, the following information:

107 (1) A comparison of the pupil enrollment in career technical education courses, foreign  
108 language courses, and visual and performing arts courses for the 2005-06 to 2011-12 school years,  
109 inclusive, to the pupil enrollment in career technical education courses, foreign language courses, and  
110 visual and performing arts courses for the 2012-13 to 2016-17 school years, inclusive.

111 (2) The reasons, reported by school districts, that pupils give for choosing to enroll in a career  
112 technical education course to satisfy the requirement specified in subparagraph (E) of paragraph (1) of  
113 subdivision (a).

114 (3) The type and number of career technical education courses that were conducted for the  
115 2005-06 to 2011-12 school years, inclusive, compared to the type and number of career technical  
116 education courses that were conducted for the 2012-13 to 2016-17 school years, inclusive.

117 (4) The number of career technical education courses that satisfied the subject matter  
118 requirements for admission to the University of California or the California State University.

119 (5) The extent to which the career technical education courses chosen by pupils are aligned  
120 with the California Career Technical Education Model Curriculum Standards, and prepare pupils for  
121 employment, advanced training, and postsecondary education.

122 (6) The number of career technical education courses that also satisfy the visual and performing  
123 arts requirement, and the number of career technical education courses that also satisfy the foreign  
124 language requirement.

125 (7) Annual pupil dropout and graduation rates for the 2011-12 to 2014-15 school years,  
126 inclusive.

127 (d) For purposes of completing the report described in subdivision (c), the Superintendent may  
128 use existing state resources and federal funds. If state or federal funds are not available or sufficient,  
129 the Superintendent may apply for and accept grants, and receive donations and other financial support  
130 from public or private sources for purposes of this section.

131 (e) For purposes of completing the report described in subdivision (c), the Superintendent may  
132 accept support, including, but not limited to, financial and technical support, from high school reform  
133 advocates, teachers, chamber organizations, industry representatives, research centers, parents, and  
134 pupils.

135 (f) This section shall become inoperative on the earlier of the following two dates:

136 (1) On July 1, immediately following the first fiscal year after the enactment of the act that adds  
137 this paragraph in which the number of career technical education courses that, as determined by the  
138 department, satisfy the foreign language requirement for admission to the California State University  
139 and the University of California is at least twice the number of career technical education courses that

140 meet these admission requirements as of January 1, 2012. This section shall be repealed on the  
141 following January 1, unless a later enacted statute, that becomes operative on or before that date,  
142 deletes or extends the dates on which it becomes inoperative and is repealed. It is the intent of the  
143 Legislature that new career technical education courses that satisfy the foreign language requirement  
144 for admission to the California State University and the University of California focus on world  
145 languages aligned with career preparation, emphasizing real-world application and technical content in  
146 related career and technical education courses.

147 (2) On July 1, 2022, and, as of January 1, 2023, is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that  
148 becomes operative on or before January 1, 2023, deletes or extends the dates on which it becomes  
149 inoperative and is repealed.

(Proposed new language underlined; language to be deleted stricken)

**PROPONENT:** Bar Association of San Francisco

### **IMPACT STATEMENT**

This resolution does not affect any other law, statute or rule other than those expressly identified.

### **CURRENT OR PRIOR RELATED LEGISLATION**

None known.

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### **RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

APPROVE IN PRINCIPLE

#### History:

No similar resolutions found.

#### Reasons:

This resolution amends Education Code sections 51220 and 51225.3 to require additional instruction on national and state political systems as part of the existing civics curriculum. This resolution should be approved in principle because of the importance of educating our students on local, state-wide, and national issues, as well as teaching them how eligible voters can register to vote.

The resolution requires the course of study for grades 7 to 12, inclusive, to add instruction on voting in the American legal and political systems. More specifically, the resolution requires “a one-semester course in American government and civics” to include the instruction of the history of voting rights and the importance of exercising voting rights; California and federal voting systems and elections; instruction on voter registration for eligible students; and how to understand a ballot.

The resolution will benefit the students in California’s public schools by providing them with the knowledge to enter the nation’s democracy through meaningful participation in elections at the municipal, county, state, and federal levels. As a result, the students will learn that they can make an impact on issues in their local community and that they can debate controversial issues with others

without animosity.

Further, the resolution does not require that the entire curriculum of a course be changed or a whole new course be added to the required areas of study. The resolution simply requires that California's public school students have the additional instruction on national and state political systems as part of the existing civics curriculum.