

House File 175 - Introduced

HOUSE FILE 175

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A BILL FOR

1 An Act relating to administration of a civics examination
2 by school districts and accredited nonpublic schools
3 as a condition of high school graduation and including
4 applicability provisions.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. Section 256.9, Code 2015, is amended by adding
2 the following new subsection:

3 NEW SUBSECTION. 66. Approve alternative civics assessments
4 pursuant to section 280.9A, subsection 1, paragraph "b".

5 Sec. 2. Section 280.9A, subsection 1, Code 2015, is amended
6 to read as follows:

7 1. The board of directors of each local public school
8 district and the authorities in charge of each nonpublic school
9 shall require that all students in grades nine through twelve
10 successfully complete or pass, as applicable, as a condition of
11 graduation, ~~instruction~~ the following:

12 a. Instruction in American history and the governments of
13 Iowa and the United States, including instruction in voting
14 statutes and procedures, voter registration requirements,
15 the use of paper ballots and voting systems in the election
16 process, and the method of acquiring and casting an absentee
17 ballot.

18 b. A civics examination that shall be the same as, and shall
19 include all questions used in, the latest available civics
20 examination administered by the United States citizenship
21 and immigration services. The proctored examination shall
22 be completed without ancillary materials and only students
23 who score a proficiency of sixty percent or higher shall
24 be considered to have successfully passed the examination.
25 Alternative assessment measures approved by the department of
26 education pursuant to section 256.9, subsection 66, may be
27 administered to children requiring special education as defined
28 in section 256B.2, subsection 1, and to students identified
29 as limited English proficient pursuant to section 280.4.
30 Each student shall be provided with an opportunity to take
31 the civics examination at least one time per school calendar
32 year. A student may take the test at any time after enrolling
33 in grade seven and may repeat the test as often as necessary
34 to demonstrate proficiency. If a student in grade seven or
35 eight passes the civics examination, the student has met the

1 graduation requirement applicable to this paragraph "b". A
2 fee shall not be imposed or collected in connection with this
3 paragraph "b".

4 Sec. 3. APPLICABILITY. Section 280.9A, subsection 1,
5 paragraph "b", as enacted by this Act, applies to any student
6 who will graduate from high school during or after the
7 2016-2017 school year.

8 Sec. 4. STATE MANDATE FUNDING SPECIFIED. In accordance
9 with section 25B.2, subsection 3, the state cost of requiring
10 compliance with any state mandate included in this Act shall
11 be paid by a school district from state school foundation aid
12 received by the school district under section 257.16. This
13 specification of the payment of the state cost shall be deemed
14 to meet all of the state funding-related requirements of
15 section 25B.2, subsection 3, and no additional state funding
16 shall be necessary for the full implementation of this Act
17 by and enforcement of this Act against all affected school
18 districts.

19 EXPLANATION

20 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with
21 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

22 This bill requires students enrolled in school districts
23 and accredited nonpublic schools to successfully pass as a
24 condition of graduation a proctored, or supervised, civics
25 examination that is the same as the latest available civics
26 examination administered by the citizenship and immigration
27 services. Students are prohibited from using ancillary
28 materials during the examination and must achieve a score of at
29 least 60 percent to successfully pass the examination.

30 Each student must be given an opportunity to take the test
31 at least once every school year, beginning in grade seven,
32 and each student may take the test, at no cost, as often as
33 necessary to demonstrate proficiency. If a student in grade
34 seven or eight passes the civics examination, the student has
35 met the graduation requirement.

1 The director of the department of education is tasked with
2 approving alternative assessment measures that school districts
3 and accredited nonpublic schools may administer to children
4 requiring special education and to English language learners.

5 The bill applies to students who will graduate from high
6 school during or after the 2016-2017 school year.

7 The bill may include a state mandate as defined in Code
8 section 25B.3. The bill requires that the state cost of
9 any state mandate included in the bill be paid by a school
10 district from state school foundation aid received by the
11 school district under Code section 257.16. The specification
12 is deemed to constitute state compliance with any state mandate
13 funding-related requirements of Code section 25B.2. The
14 inclusion of this specification is intended to reinstate the
15 requirement of political subdivisions to comply with any state
16 mandates included in the bill.