

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1244
By: Ashby
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

There are concerns that the public school curriculum and the end-of-course test for U.S. history fail to cover critical issues of historical importance and that, as a result, high school graduates are becoming less proficient in basic civics. H.B. 1244 seeks to address these concerns by replacing the end-of-course test for U.S. history as a graduation requirement for public high school students with the civics test that is based on the civics test administered to individuals applying for U.S. citizenship.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 3 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 1244 amends the Education Code to eliminate the secondary-level end-of-course test for U.S. history and to require the commissioner of education to adopt rules requiring a public school district to administer a civics test to a student in the foundation high school program. The bill prohibits a student from receiving a high school diploma until the student has performed satisfactorily on the civics test. The bill requires a student to answer at least 70 percent of the questions correctly to perform satisfactorily on the test.

H.B. 1244 requires the civics test to consist of all of the questions on the civics test administered by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services as part of the naturalization process under the federal Immigration and Nationality Act and requires the questions to be presented in a multiple-choice format. The bill requires a district to administer the test to a student when the school counselor or the teacher of the U.S. history course in which the student is enrolled, if applicable, determines that the student is prepared for the test.

H.B. 1244 requires the admission, review, and dismissal committee of a student enrolled in a special education program to determine:

- whether any allowable modification is necessary in administering the test to the student to appropriately measure the student's achievement; and
- whether the student is required to achieve satisfactory performance on the test to receive a high school diploma if the committee determines that the test would not provide an appropriate measure of the student's achievement even with allowable modifications.

H.B. 1244 requires the commissioner to adopt rules regarding the administration of the civics test. The rules may not restrict the high school grade level at which a student may take the test or limit the number of attempts a student may make to perform satisfactorily on the test. The rules must require:

- the test to be administered electronically in the presence of a teacher, teacher's aide, proctor, or campus testing coordinator;
- the test to be scored by that person or by the district; and
- the results of the test to be submitted to the Texas Education Agency not later than the last instructional day of the school year in which the test is administered.

H.B. 1244 establishes that, for the purposes of the public school accountability system, a reference in the bill's provisions to a test under statutory provisions relating to end-of-course tests for secondary-level courses includes the civics test. Performance at the level required by the bill's provisions is considered satisfactory performance for purposes of statutory provisions relating to performance standards in the assessment of academic skills. The bill requires the commissioner to determine the level of performance on the civics test considered to indicate college readiness for purposes of those provisions.

H.B. 1244 establishes that to the extent of a conflict between the bill's provisions relating to the adoption and administration of the civics test and any other provision of law, the bill's provisions control. The bill applies beginning with students who enter the ninth grade during the 2020-2021 school year.

H.B. 1244 includes a temporary provision set to expire September 1, 2027, authorizing a student who is required to perform satisfactorily on a U.S. history end-of-course test based on statutory provisions relating to such tests for secondary-level courses in effect on January 1, 2019, to elect to satisfy that requirement by performing satisfactorily on the civics test.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2019.