

**SUBJECT:** Advance placement credit for government and political science and history

**COMMITTEE:** Education — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 5 ayes — Rangel, Goolsby, Kamel, Reyna, Rodriguez  
0 nays  
4 absent — Ogden, Gallego, Harris, Moreno

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, January 31 — 30-0

**WITNESSES:** For — None  
Against — None  
On — Janelle Ashley, Stephen F. Austin State University

**BACKGROUND:** The Education Code specifies that a university or college that receives state funds must require students to complete six hours of government and six hours of history in order to graduate. The six hours in government or political science, which must include consideration of the U.S. and Texas constitutions, has been required since 1937. Completion of six semester hours in American history, of which three may be Texas history, has been required since 1955. Students in the Reserve Officer Training Corps may receive three hours credit for history and three for government for equivalent work in ROTC.

Since 1967 students have been allowed to take advance placement exams and receive up to three hours of advance placement credit for the required government courses and three hours of credit for the required history courses.

**DIGEST:** SB 181 would eliminate the three-hour limit on advance placement credit for the required history and government courses.

The bill would take immediate effect if approved by two-thirds of the membership of each house.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

Intelligent students entering state schools should be allowed to take an advance placement test in American or Texas history and political science or government and receive credit for as many hours as they can pass the test for, just as students are allowed to place out of math, English, foreign languages, biology, etc. The special statutory cap on the number of advance placement hours for meeting the government and history requirements makes little educational sense. If students know the material, there is no use making them take a class. The statutory requirement merely creates a bureaucratic delay and makes work for government and history departments.

Current law discriminates against bright students and delays the graduation of those who could receive credit for all 12 semester credit hours, but now can get credit for only six. The bill would not change the requirement that students have knowledge of American and Texas history and government.

According to the fiscal note, this bill would save the state about \$800,000 a year, starting in 1988, by eliminating the need for approximately 1,884 courses annually.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

By allowing students to place out of all 12 hours of credit in American and Texas history and political science and government coursework, the bill would deprive students of necessary learning that can come only from class experience. This is particularly important in subjects like political science or government, where a student would not have the opportunity to participate in a discussion of current events that only a classroom lecture can provide.

Advance placement tests are not always good indicators of a student's grasp of the knowledge and facts that a university seeks to have its students understand. With changing curricula, placement tests can be outdated on the material covered by universities.