

- SUBJECT:** Replacing the U.S. history EOC test with the civics test for citizenship
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 10 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Bohac, Deshotel, Gooden, K. King, Koop, Meyer, VanDeaver
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — Dutton
- WITNESSES:** For — Thomas Ratliff, Civics Education Institute, Joe Foss Institute; Randy Willis, Granger ISD, Texas Association of Rural Schools; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Audrey Young, Apple Springs ISD Board of Trustees; Chris Remy)
- Against — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Jaime Puente, Texas Graduate Student Diversity)
- On — Theresa Trevino, Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Kara Belew and Penny Schwinn, Texas Education Agency; Kim Cook and Heather Sheffield, Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment; Karin Foster)
- BACKGROUND:** Under Education Code, sec. 39.025(a), public high school students otherwise eligible to graduate are required to perform satisfactorily on certain end-of-course (EOC) assessments before receiving a diploma. For most students, this includes the EOC assessment in U.S. history.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 1776 would eliminate the U.S. history end-of-course (EOC) assessment and require students in the foundation high school program to demonstrate satisfactory performance on a civics test required for U.S. citizenship as a condition of graduation.
- The Commissioner of Education would adopt rules requiring a school district to administer the civics test, which would consist of all the

questions on the test administered to candidates for U.S. citizenship through the naturalization process presented in a multiple-choice format. A school district would administer the civics test to a student when the school counselor or the student's U.S. history teacher determined the student was ready for the test. Students would have to answer at least 70 percent of the questions correctly to achieve satisfactory performance.

The admission, review, and dismissal committee of a student in a special education program would be required to determine:

- whether any allowable modification was necessary in administering the civics test to the student to appropriately measure the student's achievement; and
- if the committee found the civics test, even with modifications, would not appropriately measure the student's achievement, whether the student was required to achieve satisfactory performance on the civics test to receive a high school diploma.

Commissioner rules on the administration of the civics test:

- would require the test to be administered electronically in the presence of a teacher, campus testing coordinator, or certain others and scored by that person or the school district;
- would require the test results to be submitted to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) no later than the last instructional day of the school year in which the test was administered; and
- could not restrict the high school grade level at which a student could take the civics test or limit the number of attempts a student could make to achieve satisfactory performance.

A student required to perform satisfactorily on the U.S. history EOC assessment in order to graduate based on the law in effect on January 1, 2017, could satisfy that requirement by passing the civics test. This provision would expire September 1, 2025.

For purposes of the public school accountability system, a reference in

code to the U.S. history EOC assessment would include the civics test. Correctly answering 70 percent of the questions on the civics test would meet the standard for satisfactory performance, and the commissioner would determine the level of performance to indicate college readiness. To the extent there was a conflict between the provisions on school accountability and any other provision of law, the provisions in CSHB 1776 would prevail.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2017, and would apply beginning with students who entered grade 9 during the 2018-19 school year.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

HB 1776 would replace the U.S. history end-of-course exam with the civics test required for U.S. citizenship, replacing a test that is too long and contains too much information to be mastered in one school year with a test that measures the critical knowledge students must have to be engaged citizens. The U.S. citizenship test requires knowledge of the most fundamental components of U.S. history. The bill would allow the U.S. citizenship test to be taken whenever the teacher or administrator felt the student was ready, giving more control and flexibility to local schools.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

Unlike the current U.S. history EOC assessment, the civics test proposed in CSHB 1776 is not aligned with the Texas essential knowledge and skills. It would be inappropriate to administer a test designed for prospective citizens as a measure of student proficiency in high school history and a requirement for graduation.

**OTHER  
OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

Requiring the U.S. citizenship test still would result in a high-stakes test in U.S. history being required for graduation. There are too many high-stakes tests in the public school system and the number should be reduced.

**NOTES:**

According to the Legislative Budget Board's (LBB's) fiscal note, CSHB 1776 would have a net positive impact to the state of \$2 million to general revenue related funds through fiscal 2018-19 because it is assumed that school districts and charters, rather than the state, would be required to

pay for the civics test. The LBB estimates the total local cost to school districts and charters would be \$7.2 million annually beginning in school year 2020-21. These costs would be distributed across districts and charters based on student enrollment and could vary considerably among districts.