



Washington Civic Education History

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Around 2007 - 2008 the State Board of Education came up with a list of additional required high school graduation requirements, what was called Core 24. An additional one-half credit (semester) of Social Studies was included without specifying what it should be. During our Lobby Team retreat in the fall of 2008, the League of Women Voters of WA decided one of our priorities would be to pass a bill requiring that one-half credit to be Civics.

We discussed the need for a separate Civics class with Rep. Dave Quall, House Education Committee Chair, and convinced him to sponsor HB 2132, which passed the Legislature unanimously and was signed by the Governor in 2009. The bill basically says: If, after July 2009, the SBE increases the number of Social Studies credits required for high school graduation, at least one-half credit must be coursework in civics.

RCW 28A.230.093 – The content of the civics requirement must include:

- Federal, state, and local government organizations and procedures;
- Rights and responsibilities of citizens addressed in the state and federal Constitutions;
- Current issues addressed at each level of government; and
- Electoral issues, including elections, ballot measures, initiatives, and referenda.

Discussion has taken place over what should be covered as local government. It should be those that are governed by elected officials and funded by property tax—county, city, school board, port district, fire district, utility district, and park district (other areas might have water, sewer, or hospital districts). Tribal government should also be covered although the public doesn't elect its governing officials or pay property tax to support it.

On November 10, 2010, the State Board of Education voted to add one-half credit of Civics to the graduation requirements for the high school class of 2016. Check with your school districts to see if the course is listed in the Graduation Requirements, what resources they will be using in the class, and what help the League might offer. Make sure they know about the League's *The State We're In: Washington* and any booklets your local League has produced about your cities' and county government.

HB 1896, passed in 2018, was an improvement on HB 2132 in that it required that the **Civics class be a stand-alone class**, not embedded in another social studies class, and added a **professional development program** to improve the ability of teachers to provide students with an effective Civics education from kindergarten through twelfth grade. It also added **tribal government** and a **study of the federally administered naturalization test** to the content of the Civics class.