

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1954
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Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In Texas, civic education does not adequately emphasize critical topics, such as the state and federal court systems, the judiciary's crucial function in maintaining checks and balances on the government, and the selection process for judicial officeholders. Consequently, students may struggle to understand the intricacies of the judicial system and its impact on their individual rights and freedoms. This knowledge gap could hinder their ability to make informed decisions on important issues, such as voting for judicial candidates or comprehending court rulings.

Accordingly, S.B. 1954 would require the State Board of Education to adopt essential knowledge and skills for the social studies curriculum, specifically focusing on the structure and role of the judiciary and the selection of judicial officeholders at the federal and state levels. This change would enhance students' knowledge and engagement in judicial issues, better preparing them to become informed and responsible citizens who can positively contribute to their communities and the democratic process.

As proposed, S.B. 1954 amends current law relating to the essential knowledge and skills of the public school foundational curriculum for civics education and social studies.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Sections 28.002(h-1) and (h-2), Education Code, as follows:

(h-1) Requires the State Board of Education (SBOE), in adopting the essential knowledge and skills for the foundation curriculum under Subsection (a)(1) (relating to requiring school districts offering kindergarten through grade 12 to offer, as a required curriculum, a foundation curriculum that includes certain academic areas of study), as appropriate, to adopt essential knowledge and skills that develop each student's civic knowledge, including an understanding of:

- (1)-(2) makes no changes to these subdivisions;
- (3) the structure, organization, function, and processes of government institutions at the federal, state, and local levels; and
- (4) the founding documents of the United States, including:
 - (A)-(B) makes no changes to these paragraphs.
 - (C) the Federalist Papers, including the entirety of Essays 10, 51, and 78;
 - (D) excerpts from *Marbury v. Madison*, 5 U.S. 137 (1803);
 - (E)-(I) makes nonsubstantive changes to these paragraphs.

(h-2) Provides that in adopting the essential knowledge and skills for the social studies curriculum for each grade level from kindergarten through grade 12, SBOE is required to adopt essential knowledge and skills that develop each student's civic knowledge, including:

(1) an understanding of:

(A)-(B) makes no changes to these paragraphs;

(C) the structure, organization, function, and processes of government institutions at the federal, state, and local levels, with an emphasis on:

(i) the structure of the federal court system and the court system of this state;

(ii) the role the judiciary, as a co-equal branch of government, plays in providing checks and balances on governmental power;

(iii) the selection of judicial officeholders within the federal and state judicial systems, with special consideration given to state and local officeholders of this state;

(iv) the processing and flow of cases at all court levels in this state;

(v) the role judges and juries play in the criminal and civil justice systems; and

(vi) the sharing of governance between the federal and state governments in a federalist system and the interplay between the judicial examination of legal issues at the federal and state level; and

(D) makes no changes to this paragraph; and

(2)-(3) makes no changes to these subdivisions.

SECTION 2. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2023–2024 school year.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2023.