

Pennsylvania Proposed Bill: High School Students Must Pass Civics Test to Graduate

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A bill proposed in the Pennsylvania House would require all high school students to pass a civics test to receive their diplomas. Rep. Karen Boback, a Republican from Luzerne, said the “alarming decline in civics knowledge among young Americans,” is the reason she feels the civics test is necessary.

Boback’s memo noted that a 2019 survey conducted by the University of Pennsylvania’s Annenberg Public Policy Center revealed the students’ lack of knowledge. The survey alarmingly noted that only 39% of adults were able to identify at least one of the three branches of the U.S. government.

The Proposed High School Civics Test

The test proposed by Boback would include questions from the U.S. citizenship exam conducted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Boback’s memo states that high school students would be allowed to take this civics test as many times as necessary to attain a passing grade of at least 70%, at least once during grades 7-12.

This bill is in addition to the already existing 2017 state law that requires all schools to devise a locally designed civics test for high school students. Currently, schools do not require a passing grade on this civics test to be able to graduate.

Rep. Boback’s Memo on the Proposed Bill

“Considering the events of this past election cycle and the critical importance of free and fair elections to our democratic process, I believe it is essential to build upon” the 2017 law, Boback wrote.

“It is my hope to ensure that students have at least a basic knowledge and understanding of civics and government in order to prepare and encourage them to be responsibly engaged citizens, and we believe that this legislation is an important and necessary step towards achieving this objective,” Boback added.

Civics Course and Test Requirement in the U.S.

The Center of American Progress released a news article, “The State of Civics Education,” that notes the status of the civics education requirements of all high schools by state. Statistics showed that nine states in the U.S. do not require a civics course, and only 16 states have a civics test required to graduate. In addition, [not all states include passing the test as a graduation requirement](#).

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National Law Review, Volume XI, Number 110

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/pennsylvania-proposed-bill-high-school-students-must-pass-civics-test-to-graduate>