

1 **Civics Education Amendments**

2025 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Douglas R. Welton

Senate Sponsor: Lincoln Fillmore

3 **LONG TITLE**

4 **General Description:**

5 This bill amends certain graduation requirements.

6 **Highlighted Provisions:**

7 This bill:

- 8 ▶ adds a social studies graduation requirement;
- 9 ▶ requires certain social studies related instruction;
- 10 ▶ removes a testing requirement;
- 11 ▶ provides for alternatives to portions of certain graduation requirements; and
- 12 ▶ makes technical changes.

13 **Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

14 None

15 **Other Special Clauses:**

16 This bill provides a special effective date.

17 **Utah Code Sections Affected:**

18 AMENDS:

19 **53E-4-204**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapters 346, 527

20 **53E-4-205**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2021, Chapter 114

21 ENACTS:

22 **53E-4-205.2**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

23 REPEALS:

24 **53E-4-205.1**, as enacted by Laws of Utah 2020, Third Special Session, Chapter 10

26 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

27 Section 1. Section **53E-4-204** is amended to read:

28 **53E-4-204 . Standards and graduation requirements.**

- 29 (1) The state board shall establish rigorous core standards for Utah public schools and
30 graduation requirements under Section 53E-3-501 for grades 9 through 12 that:

- 31 (a) are consistent with state law and federal regulations;
- 32 (b) use competency-based standards and assessments;
- 33 (c) include instruction that stresses general financial literacy from basic budgeting to
- 34 financial investments, including bankruptcy education and a general financial literacy
- 35 test-out option;[~~and~~]
- 36 (d) include graduation requirements in language arts, mathematics, and science that
- 37 exceed:
- 38 (i) 3.0 units in language arts including up to 0.5 units emphasizing verbal
- 39 communication completed in a course or a school sponsored activity;
- 40 (ii) 2.0 units in mathematics; and
- 41 (iii) and 2.0 units in science[~~;~~] ; and
- 42 (e) include a graduation requirement in social studies that is equal to or exceeds 3.5
- 43 units, including ~~H~~ :
- 43a (i) ~~H~~ at least 1.0 unit in American constitutional government and
- 44 citizenship as described in Section 53E-4-205.2; ~~H~~ and
- 44a (ii) **the following courses that may satisfy the graduation requirement**
- 44b **described in this Subsection (1)(e):**
- 44c **(A) at least 0.5 units in Advanced Placement U.S. Government;**
- 44d **(B) at least 0.5 units in Advanced Placement Comparative Government; and**
- 44e **(C) a concurrent enrollment government course. ~~H~~**
- 45 (f) ensure up to 0.5 units described in Subsection (1)(e) may be earned by:
- 46 (i) completing a course or a school sponsored activity emphasizing verbal
- 47 communication provided that a significant portion of the course or activity is
- 48 dedicated to civic education, including:
- 49 (A) policy analysis;
- 50 (B) governmental systems; and
- 51 (C) civic engagement; or
- 52 (ii) participation in the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps described in 10 U.S.C
- 53 Sec. 2031.
- 54 (2) The state board shall establish competency-based standards and assessments for elective
- 55 courses.
- 56 (3) The state board shall study requiring all LEAs to issue a high school diploma to students
- 57 who receive:
- 58 (a) an associate's degree with at least 60 credit hours from an accredited post-secondary

59 institution; or

60 (b) an industry certification with at least 500 hours of instruction from a business, trade
61 association, or other industry group in accordance with Section 53E-3-501.

62 Section 2. Section **53E-4-205** is amended to read:

63 **53E-4-205 . American civics education initiative for adult education.**

64 (1) As used in this section:

65 (a) "Adult education program" means an organized educational program below the
66 postsecondary level, other than a regular full-time K-12 secondary education
67 program, provided by an LEA or nonprofit organization that provides the opportunity
68 for an adult to further the adult's high school level education.

69 (b) "Basic civics test" means a test that includes 50 of the questions on the civics test
70 form used by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services:

71 (i) to determine that an individual applying for United States citizenship meets the
72 basic citizenship skills specified in 8 U.S.C. Sec. 1423; and

73 (ii) in accordance with 8 C.F.R. Sec. 312.2.

74 (2)~~[(a) Except as provided in Subsection (2)(b), the]~~ The state board shall require[:]

75 ~~[(i) a public school student who graduates on or after January 1, 2016, to pass a basic~~
76 ~~civics test as a condition for receiving a high school diploma; and]~~

77 ~~[(ii)]~~ a student enrolled in an adult education program to pass a basic civics test as a
78 condition for receiving an adult education secondary diploma ~~hat~~ → , **unless the student has**

78a **completed the American constitutional government and citizenship course described**
in

78b **Section 53E-4-205.2 ← hat .**

79 ~~[(b) The state board may require a public school student to pass an alternate assessment~~
80 ~~instead of a basic civics test if the student qualifies for an alternate assessment, as~~
81 ~~defined in state board rule made in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah~~
82 ~~Administrative Rulemaking Act.]~~

83 (3) An individual who correctly answers a minimum of 35 out of the 50 questions on a
84 basic civics test passes the test and an individual who correctly answers fewer than 35
85 out of 50 questions on a basic civics test does not pass the test.

86 (4) In accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, the
87 state board shall make rules that:

88 ~~[(a) require an LEA that serves secondary students to administer a basic civics test or~~
89 ~~alternate assessment to a public school student enrolled in the LEA;]~~

90 ~~[(b)] (a) require an adult education program provider to administer a basic civics test to~~
 91 ~~an individual who intends to receive an adult education secondary diploma; and~~

92 ~~[(e)] (b) allow an individual to take a basic civics test as many times as needed in order~~
 93 ~~to pass the test[; and] .~~

94 ~~[(d) for the alternate assessment described in Subsection (2)(b), describe:]~~

95 ~~[(i) the content of an alternate assessment;]~~

96 ~~[(ii) how a public school student qualifies for an alternate assessment; and]~~

97 ~~[(iii) how an LEA determines if a student passes an alternate assessment.]~~

98 Section 3. Section **53E-4-205.2** is enacted to read:

99 **53E-4-205.2 . American constitutional government and citizenship course**
 100 **standards.**

101 (1) Beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, and as part of the social studies requirement
 102 established under Section 53E-4-204, the state board shall require instruction on
 103 American constitutional government and citizenship.

104 (2) In accordance with Subsections (3) and (4), the state board shall create standards for the
 105 course required under Subsection (1) that:

106 (a) examine American founding principles, including:

107 (i) classical republicanism, natural rights, and colonial religious traditions; and

108 (ii) the text and principles of the Declaration of Independence and relationship to the
 109 United States Constitution;

110 (b) examine the text of the United States Constitution, including:

111 (i) structure, powers, and limits of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches;

112 and

113 (ii) the principles and operation of federalism and the state constitutional tradition;

114 (c) examine the development of the United States Constitution through amendments,
 115 including:

116 (i) the creation and application of the Bill of Rights;

117 (ii) the adoption and enforcement of the Civil War and Reconstruction Amendments;

118 and

119 (iii) the adoption and enforcement of the other voting rights amendments; and

120 (d) examine the practice of self-government at the state and local level, including:

121 (i) the Utah Constitution and local government, including counties, municipalities,
 122 and tribal governments;

123 (ii) state and local elections, including the current candidate nomination and

- 124 selection; and
- 125 (iii) the responsibilities of citizenship and participation in civil society.
- 126 (3) The course described in this part shall prioritize a close reading of the following primary
- 127 source documents:
- 128 (a) the Mayflower Compact;
- 129 (b) the Declaration of Independence;
- 130 (c) the Iroquois Constitution;
- 131 (d) the United States Constitution;
- 132 (e) George Washington's Farewell Address;
- 133 (f) the Federalist and Antifederalist Papers;
- 134 (g) speeches of Fredrick Douglass;
- 135 (h) the Lincoln-Douglas Debates;
- 136 (i) speeches of Abraham Lincoln;
- 137 (j) the Seneca Falls Declaration;
- 138 (k) the Letter from Birmingham Jail;
- 139 (l) the Utah Constitution; and
- 140 (m) other essential documents from American constitutional history.
- 141 (4) The state board shall, in collaboration with the Civic Thought and Leadership Initiative
- 142 within the Center for Constitutional Studies at Utah Valley University, develop
- 143 standards that fulfill the requirements of this section.

144 Section 4. **Repealer.**

145 This bill repeals:

146 Section **53E-4-205.1, Waiver of basic civics test graduation requirement.**

147 Section 5. **Effective Date.**

148 This bill takes effect on July 1, 2025.