

Through the Chair to the Senate Community & Regional Affairs Committee considering SB72: I am Stuart Thompson, a District 10 Citizen, testifying on behalf of myself. Start of my prepared 375 word testimony. Compare with other testimony.

The testing of graduating high school students to verify effective grasp of civics is critical to posterity.

1. It is constitutionally justified. Alaska Constitution Article 7 reaches to the implied duty of Alaskan government to enable citizens to ensure our form of government works. There is Article 1 Sections 1&2 that become useless nonsense without each citizen knowing that the entire success of Alaska government is dependent on his knowing how to honor his civic obligations; and how to enforce the People's Will on and through government. Alaska's Constitution states it is dedicated (the exact word) to civic rights and corresponding civic obligations of each citizen.
2. It is philosophically justified. Using Abraham Lincoln's useful phrase, we have government OF, FOR, and BY the people. The methods of monarchies, aristocracies, socialism, and dictatorships all perform government OF and FOR the People---but not BY. It's easily proven that modern Alaskan adults are most educated and practiced in the methods of monarchies. The family is a natural monarchy (first observed by Aristotle) and most businesses are the same. Accordingly, some people often show they think that citizenship is just electing somebody who uses desired prejudices and shows willingness to get them government hand-outs; and only complaining when that official doesn't deliver.
3. It is strategically justified. America has suffered from long-term decline in quality literacy and numeracy. What was the expected 5th grade literacy quality in the 1800's is now classed as complex literacy today. See US Dept. of Education's assessment of US adult literacy 20 years ago---reporting only 13% of Americans are capable of complex literacy. It is better demonstrated in records of US military induction failures from inability of tested enlistees to read at a 4th grade level. World War I saw 2% functional illiteracy; WWII saw 4%; the Korean War saw 19%; and the Vietnam War saw 27%. You also see evidence of mediocre literacy in legislative body dependence on lobbyists, and public dependence on either left or right leaning media explanations of reality. Therefore, under current conditions, if graduating students aren't made to demonstrate citizen practices to the same quality as they can demonstrate riding a bike or operating computers and phones, illiteracy will provoke escalating government perversion and eventual government collapse.

Thankyou! I will e-mail the text of this testimony to your committee address.

Sincerely,

Stuart Thompson

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To: Senator Hughes, Senator Myers, and Committee Members

My name is Amy Gallaway. I am a high school civics teacher in Fairbanks Alaska and the 2020 Alaska Teacher of the Year. I support the concept of SB72, but I do not support the bill in its current iteration.

I tell my students, representative democracy is a living organism, it is a process of becoming, not a destination. It requires the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of civic life to be systematically taught and assessed k-12. So, I am grateful that SB72 elevates the importance of civic education.

I fully support the concept AND I strongly suggest the committee use the recent report from [Educating for American Democracy](#) as the framework for this bill. The commission was funded by DOE and National Endowment for the Humanities, and the report guidelines are billed as seminal, non-partisan conclusions that states and districts should use to build a new model for civics and history. The report offers a “road map” for reform. The main conclusions that apply to SB72 include:

- Schools should “integrate the teaching of history and civics” into a complementary curriculum. At the high-school level, civics should NOT take the form of a “one semester and done” requirement.
- All levels of government should work together to enlarge and continuously support the nation’s corps of history and civics teachers
- States and districts should *shift from breadth to depth*. Many state civics requirements read as long lists of facts and principles to be memorized. States should reconceive educational goals in terms of open-ended questions to stimulate analytical thinking.

This brings me to my concerns: the creation of the curriculum/assessment and the assessment being tied to graduation. The final assessment that is created will make or break the success of this endeavor. I cannot overstate the importance of this. Therefore I suggest:

- SB72 should designate Alaskan educators must be part of creating the curriculum and assessment and not just “the Board”. The curriculum and the assessment need to be developed by Alaskan civics educators who are experts in our field and who know Alaska’s students.
- The curriculum needs to be multi-year not a one-semester class in high school. Effective civics education builds knowledge, skills, and dispositions over time and must be performed and practiced in real life, not just content out of a book to be regurgitated.
- The bill should direct the assessment to be flexible and personalized to local communities. It should be more of a portfolio of options rather than a one-and-done test. For example, many teachers in Fairbanks use the nationally renowned We the People curriculum and participate in a simulated congressional hearing competition. I have been using this program in my classes for 15 years. Many interior legislators such as Grier Hopkins, John Coghill, and Scott Kawaski have been involved in the hearings, seeing first hand the depth of knowledge as well as the civic responsibility this program builds. Successful completion of a program like this should be an option for the mandated assessment. Local control will build success.

My second concern is the graduation mandate-- without state financial support it will undoubtedly result in lower graduation rates in under-resourced districts. Our state is diverse and many schools struggle with being understaffed. Before you mandate a high school qualifying exam in civics, I encourage you to actively solicit input from educators across the state. Additionally, any mandated assessment tied to graduation must be accompanied by enlarging the number of highly qualified civics teachers employed in our districts, as well as robust professional development and support for districts from the state. You can't just give a mandated assessment without providing support to schools to make students successful. This is a recipe for disaster and is the definition of an unfunded mandate.

I am hopeful for the state of our union. Civics education is on the verge of having its moment, and if we heed the lessons learned from decades of neglect, as well as outright disdain, if we listen to the years of research now being published, we can reinvent American representative democracy and be closer to the promise of a more perfect union for all Alaskans. Thank you for your service to our state and to the ideal of republican self-government. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

I support SB-72. This is because I believe our young people are loosing track of our nation's founding & the basic principles of our Republic. It is easy to do in today's world as we focus on social justice & equity as our ultimate guide instead of the founding principles laid out in the Declaration of Independence, The Constitution & The Bill of Rights.

The things I noted above are all legitimate discussions and allowed per our freedom of speech but I'm not certain everyone understands the value of that right, one of our founding principles.

We need to be sure our youth understand our fragile freedom & how we can maintain it & fight for it. It is not a given & can easily go away due to the perceived critical needs of the moment.

Dave Peck

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Sent from my iPod