

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 27, 2022

8:05 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair  
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair  
Representative Grier Hopkins  
Representative Mike Prax  
Representative Mike Cronk  
Representative Ronald Gillham

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 72(FIN)

"An Act relating to civics education, civics assessments, and secondary school graduation requirements; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HCS CSSB 72(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 72

SHORT TITLE: SEC. SCHOOL CIVICS EDUCATION

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) STEVENS

02/05/21	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/05/21	(S)	EDC, CRA
03/10/21	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/10/21	(S)	Heard & Held
03/10/21	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/19/21	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/19/21	(S)	Heard & Held
03/19/21	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/22/21	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/22/21	(S)	Scheduled but Not Heard
03/24/21	(S)	EDC RPT CS 5DP NEW TITLE
03/24/21	(S)	DP: HOLLAND, HUGHES, STEVENS, MICCICHE, BEGICH

03/24/21 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205  
 03/24/21 (S) Moved CSSB 72(EDC) Out of Committee  
 03/24/21 (S) MINUTE(EDC)  
 03/30/21 (S) CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
 03/30/21 (S) Heard & Held  
 03/30/21 (S) MINUTE(CRA)  
 04/08/21 (S) CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
 04/08/21 (S) Heard & Held  
 04/08/21 (S) MINUTE(CRA)  
 04/20/21 (S) CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
 04/20/21 (S) Moved CSSB 72(CRA) Out of Committee  
 04/20/21 (S) MINUTE(CRA)  
 04/21/21 (S) CRA RPT CS 2DP 2NR NEW TITLE  
 04/21/21 (S) DP: HUGHES, GRAY-JACKSON  
 04/21/21 (S) NR: MYERS, WILSON  
 04/21/21 (S) FIN REFERRAL ADDED AFTER CRA  
 02/01/22 (S) FIN AT 1:00 PM SENATE FINANCE 532  
 02/01/22 (S) -- Invited Testimony --  
 02/08/22 (S) FIN AT 1:00 PM SENATE FINANCE 532  
 02/08/22 (S) Moved CSSB 72(FIN) Out of Committee  
 02/08/22 (S) MINUTE(FIN)  
 02/09/22 (S) FIN RPT CS 4DP 1NR NEW TITLE  
 02/09/22 (S) DP: STEDMAN, BISHOP, HOFFMAN,  
 WIELECHOWSKI  
 02/09/22 (S) NR: OLSON  
 02/16/22 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)  
 02/16/22 (S) VERSION: CSSB 72(FIN)  
 02/17/22 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 02/17/22 (H) EDC, FIN  
 03/11/22 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106  
 03/11/22 (H) Heard & Held  
 03/11/22 (H) MINUTE(EDC)  
 04/27/22 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

TIM LAMKIN, Staff  
 Senator Gary Stevens  
 Alaska State Legislature  
 Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Offered feedback on proposed amendments to CSSB 72(FIN), on behalf of Senator Stevens, prime sponsor.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:05:53 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ANDI STORY called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. Representatives Hopkins, Prax, Gillham, Cronk, Drummond, and Story were present at the call to order.

SB 72-SEC. SCHOOL CIVICS EDUCATION

8:06:41 AM

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that the only order of business would be CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 72(FIN), "An Act relating to civics education, civics assessments, and secondary school graduation requirements; and providing for an effective date."

8:07:03 AM

CO-CHAIR STORY noted that public testimony had been left open from a previous hearing, and, after ascertaining there was no one who wished to testify, she closed public testimony on CSSB 72(FIN).

8:07:33 AM

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND moved to adopt Amendment 1 to CSSB 72(FIN), labeled 32-LS0478\D.2, Marx, 4/20/22, which read as follows:

Page 1, line 1:  
Delete ", **civics assessments**,"

Page 1, line 5:  
Delete "**and assessment**"

Page 1, line 7:  
Delete "and assessment that are"  
Insert "that is"

Page 1, line 9:  
Delete "and assessment"

Page 1, line 12, through page 2, line 13:  
Delete all material and insert:  
"(b) A district shall annually provide to the department a report that includes a description of the civics courses offered in the district and other civics education curriculum information as required by the department in regulation."

Page 2, lines 27 - 29:

Delete all material and insert:

**"(4) a description of the civics education curriculum in the state public school system and civics courses offered in each district."**

[8:07:48 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY objected for the purpose of discussion. She provided that the amendment would remove the testing requirement from the legislation. She stated that currently the proposed legislation would require students to pass a civics exam before receiving their high school diploma. Referring to pages 100 and 101 in the 2017 report from the Alaska Legislative Task Force on Civics Education [included in the committee packet], she pointed out that the task force did not support a high-stakes test. She recalled that the federal requirements of No Child Left Behind resulted in a complicated process requiring moderators and proctors, and the outcomes [that were expected never materialized]. She expressed hesitancy to support the [requirement of a civics exam].

CO-CHAIR STORY recounted that she had participated virtually in several high school government classes. Information on the proposed legislation and a copy of the sponsor statement had been sent to these classes; afterwards, seniors were questioned on the civics testing requirement. She stated that some students responded that they had no problem with a testing requirement; however, a majority of the students supported civics education that focused on class projects. She expressed the understanding that class projects create discussions on the importance of voting, which would encourage more students to participate in elections. She voiced the understanding that group projects in government classes "make it real" for students. She cited the example of a project where students had invited assembly members into their class. The students had become involved with the issues by picking an assembly member and following his/her campaign. She provided that the goal [with projects in classrooms] would be to put civics into action. She relayed that Lem Wheelles from the Professional Teachers Practices Commission recommended a [civics] test as a learning tool but not a requirement for graduation. She stated that the legislation would require the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to develop specific [civics] curriculum. She stated that the students could be tested on the [curriculum] without it being a high-stakes assessment.

[8:12:38 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX stated that the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD) voiced concern about a test being a requirement [to graduate]. He stated that his concern is not about the naturalization test, but the requirement for students to be familiar with Native systems of government. He expressed the opinion that this is an unknown factor within the legislation, and a test on Alaska Native history, as a graduation requirement, would be concerning. He explained that there is a fluctuation in the population of FNSBSD, especially because of the construction trades and the two military bases. He expressed the opinion that because the student population is "pretty fluid" this type of test would not be a good idea. He offered his support for a test as part of an assessment but added that a test requirement for graduation would be excessive. He suggested amending the proposed amendment by deleting the word "annually" from line 16.

[8:15:18 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 8:15 a.m.

[8:15:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 1, [which would remove the language "annually" from line 16 of the amendment, which read, "(b) a district shall annually provide to the department a report that includes a".]

[8:15:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS objected for the purpose of discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX stated that currently Amendment 1 would require the districts to provide an annual report to DEED. He voiced the opinion that the curriculum would not differ much on a yearly basis, so there would be no need for an annual report. He argued that FNSBSD is currently on a five-year review cycle and an annual report would be excessive.

[8:17:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS responded in agreement with Representative Prax, but he suggested that there could be another way that would not change the structure of the bill. He deferred to the staff of the bill sponsor.

[8:17:37 AM](#)

TIM LAMKIN, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens, Alaska State Legislature, directed attention to Section 2 of CSSB 72(FIN). He stated that this section would be included in AS 14.07.168. He said that this statute stipulates that the Board of Education and Early Development, in conjunction with districts around the state, provide an annual report to the legislature on a "slew of things." He stated that this idea pertains to state standards; there is a concern that once reviewed and updated [programs] would be "put on the shelf" and not reviewed again for some time. He specified that this has been the [case with civics education], and an annual report would ensure [the curriculum] would be reviewed every year. He continued that once [the program] is established, theoretically, it would be just a matter of updating. He warned that, once curriculum is developed, without an annual review, [the program] could possibly be forgotten.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS argued that Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 1 would be a change to the districts' requirements but would not impact Section 2 of the bill. He stated that Section 2 of the proposed legislation would still require the board to provide a report to the legislature. He explained that if districts do not change their curriculum, the report to the legislature would not change. As an example, he said that the language in the conceptual amendment could read that "a district shall notify the department when curriculum is finalized and changed." He stated that this change would not impact the annual report to the legislature and would be less work for the districts. He questioned whether Representative Prax would consider withdrawing the motion to adopt the conceptual amendment and offer alternative language. He stated that an annual report would still be made to the legislature, but districts would only report to the department when their curriculum changed.

[8:20:19 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:20 a.m. to 8:22 a.m.

[8:22:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX [moved to withdraw his motion to adopt] Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 1. [No objection was

stated, and Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 1 was treated as withdrawn.]

[8:22:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment 2 to Amendment 1. He stated that the conceptual amendment would remove the language "annually" from line 16 of the amendment [which currently reads "(b) a district shall annually provide to the department a report that includes a"] and insert the language "when updated" on line 18 after "curriculum information". There being no objection, Conceptual Amendment 2 to Amendment 1 was adopted.

[8:23:35 AM](#)

MR. LAMKIN conveyed the bill sponsor's appreciation. He reminded the committee that he had written the report for the bill sponsor and appreciated that the document was still "alive."

[8:24:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS noted that Amendment 1 had not yet been adopted. He stated that he had read the final report from the civics task force and offered the opinion that civics education is important. He stated that a high school civics teacher in Fairbanks, Amy Galloway, had been the [2020 Teacher of the Year] in Alaska, and she had provided compelling testimony to the legislature on civics education. He stated that the proposed legislation, as amended, would alleviate some of her concerns. He offered support for Amendment 1, as amended, especially for classroom projects [on civics]. He stated that during the civics task force meetings many teachers, including Lem Wheelles, had testified that they no longer used the citizenship test as a learning tool but as a fun exercise.

[8:26:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK stated that he would not object to the amendment, but he expressed the opinion that there does need to be accountability.

[8:26:53 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY stated that if [the legislation imposed] a high-stakes test, districts would need to add extra classes and

possibly staff. She expressed concern that this would create an unfunded mandated. She questioned whether DEED would combine civics classes with American government classes.

[8:27:57 AM](#)

MR. LAMKIN, in response to Representative Prax, stated that Senator Stevens aligns with the idea that "if it's tested then it's taught." He communicated that the bill sponsor's concern is students' exposure to social studies and civics, whether or not a test is required to graduate. He stated that removing the test requirement would be agreeable to the bill sponsor.

[8:29:06 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY expressed the opinion that teachers are continually assessing students in a variety of ways to make sure standards to pass classes are met. She asserted that this is an example of accountability. She voiced the opinion that focusing on one task would force educators to "teach to the test," and that would leave project-based learning, which puts civics into action, at risk.

[8:29:43 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY withdrew her objection to the motion to adopt Amendment 1, [as amended], to CSSB 72(FIN).

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX objected for the purpose of discussion. He questioned whether the committee would be receiving a report from DEED. He offered that the assessment part of the legislation could be revisited at some point in the future. In agreement with Representative Cronk, he stated that more attention may need to be put on accountability. He removed his objection.

[8:30:58 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND objected for the purpose of discussion. She stated that fiscal note 2 shows that DEED's revision and adoption of social studies standards is currently underway. She related that this work specially includes civics standards for secondary school civics curriculum, and this curriculum would be made available to districts at no cost. She expressed satisfaction that the department has already taken care of developing the curriculum. She stated that there may be a small cost in terms of legal fees and stipends for educators and

stakeholders to develop the civics assessment and curriculum, but that may change by eliminating the assessment.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND removed her objection. There being no further objection, Amendment 1, as amended, was adopted to CSSB 72(FIN).

[8:32:49 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 8:32 a.m.

[8:33:09 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND moved to report CSSB 72(FIN), as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HCS CSSB 72(EDC) was reported out of the House Education Standing Committee.

[8:33:46 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:33 a.m. to 8:37 a.m.

[8:37:11 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:37 a.m.