

# AGENDA ITEM

54-112 MARCH 7 2014

**DATE:** March 6, 2014

**TO:** Members, Board Committee on Operations  
Members, Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Joseph Dunn, Chief Executive Officer

**SUBJECT:** Support Position Re Civic Learning and Engagement SB 897  
(Steinberg) and AB 1817 (Gomez)

---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This agenda item seeks approval to support two legislative measures promoting civics learning and engagement among K-12 students and adult learners in California.

In January, *The California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning* reported on benefits of civic learning: “The American public and business community are keenly interested in youth developing the competencies necessary to thrive in a changing global economy. Civic learning not only enhances knowledge of economic and political processes, but supports college and career readiness through opportunities for youth to apply academic concepts in real-world settings, work collaboratively in teams, and engage with professional role models.”

Adult education is also an important branch of education that needs support to focus on civic learning and engagement. Adult education provides educational opportunities and services to equip adults with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively as citizens, workers, parents and community members. The California Department of Education (CDE) serves over one million adult learners annually, including adult immigrants, adults with disabilities, disadvantaged adults, homeless adults, incarcerated adults, and single parents.

Finally, existing state law calls for voter registration outreach programs for high schools. But in reality, resources dedicated to outreach vary greatly by school district and county registrar office. It is not well known that California is one of the few states that allow preregistration of 17-year-olds who will be 18 at the time of the next election. Engaging young people early and creating meaningful connections to the electoral process, particularly for those in underserved communities, helps to increase their civic engagement. (California Civic Engagement Project of the University of California Davis, Center for Regional Change, 2012)

---

## BACKGROUND

### SB 897 (Steinberg):

- (1) AB 86, Chapter 48, Statutes of 2013, established the California Career Pathways (CCPT) to provide funding to motivate the development of sustained K–14 career pathways programs that connect businesses, K–12 schools, and community colleges in order to better prepare students for the workplace.

SB 897 clarifies that public sector entities can participate in the 2013 Career Pathways Trust so that students can gain skills to work in our emerging economy, regardless of whether those skills are gained in the public sector or the private sector.

- (2) The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards is the result of a three year state-led collaborative effort developed for states to upgrade their state social studies standards and for local school districts, schools, teachers to strengthen their social studies programs.

As a condition of receipt of Trust funds for pathways connected with public sector entities, SB 897 requires the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to consider whether grant recipients must include the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards.

- (3) AB 86, Chapter 48, Statutes of 2013, also addressed adult basic education by appropriating \$25 million to the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) for two-year planning and implementation grants for the following:

- Elementary and secondary basic skills, including classes required for a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate
- Classes and courses for immigrants eligible for education services in citizenship and English as a second language and workforce preparation classes in basic skills
- Education programs for adults with disabilities
- Short-term career technical education programs with high employment potential
- Programs for apprentices

The CCCCCO and the CDE are currently working in partnership to implement the requirements outlined in AB 86. The funds will be provided to eligible consortia for the purpose of developing regional plans for adult education.

SB 897 reemphasizes the importance of civic empowerment among adult learners enrolled in our state schools by requiring basic teaching of government, civic engagement, and registering to vote in certain adult education classes.

**AB 1817 (Gomez):**

The California Civic Engagement Project of the University of California Davis, Center for Regional Change (UC Davis) recently examined the state's voter registration rates for the 2002 through 2010 general elections. Despite gains, the youth remain underrepresented in California's electorate.

A strong youth electoral participation is critical to achieving a robust and fully representative democracy. Pre-registration and high school civics education are highly effective ways to reach younger students, particularly underrepresented youth, before they become eligible to vote. (UC Davis)

AB 1817 would permit the governing board of a school district to authorize a high school student 16 years of age or older to become a deputy registrar of voters in order to pre-register and register to vote qualified students on his or her high school campus.

The goal of the bill is to empower students, through their student body governments, to begin leading their own connections to civic engagement and the electoral process. The bill builds upon existing Education Code related to "High School Voter Weeks," allowing deputy registrars of voters to register students on any high school campus and Elections Code allowing 17 year olds to pre-register to vote.

## **DISCUSSION**

Too many studies show an alarming deficiency in civic knowledge and in turn the ability for our residents and citizens to protect our democracy. This deficiency is reflected across our state's diverse population and age groups, including our K-12 students and adult learners:

- **U.S. ranked 139th** in voter participation of 172 world democracies in 2007.
- **24% of graduating high school seniors** scored at the proficient or advanced level in civics in 2010.
- **Fewer than 70%** of high school seniors reported learning about important parts of civic knowledge in 2010, including the U.S. Constitution, Congress, or the court system.
- **College seniors scored only 54% correct answers** on a test measuring civic knowledge. (U.S. Department of Education, 2011)

As a democracy, we depend on the civic knowledge and engagement of all individuals, including our students. The importance of civic learning and a vision of citizenship and social efficacy must become the staples of every American's education. (U.S. Department of Education)

### **FISCAL / PERSONNEL IMPACT**

Any costs for implementing the legislative measures will be covered by private funds and / or state general funds.

### **RULE AMENDMENTS**

None.

### **BOARD BOOK IMPACT**

None.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

This agenda item recommends approval of support for legislation that would promote civics learning and engagement among the state's K-12 students and adult learners.

### **PROPOSED BOARD COMMITTEE RESOLUTION:**

Should the Board Committee on Operations agree with the above recommendation, the following resolution would be appropriate:

**RESOLVED**, that the Board Committee on Operations recommends that the Board approve support of the proposed legislation to promote civics learning and engagement among the state's K-12 students and adult learners.

### **PROPOSED BOARD OF TRUSTEES RESOLUTION:**

Should the Board concur with the recommendation of the Board Committee on Operations, the following resolution would be in order:

**RESOLVED**, that upon the recommendation of the Board Committee on Operations, the Board hereby approves support the proposed legislation to promote civics learning and engagement among the state's K-12 students and adult learners.