

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
87R18402 CXP-D

C.S.S.B. 1889
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Higher Education
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Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The teaching of knowledgeable, responsible American citizenship has never been more important or necessary. If American democracy is to thrive, our nation needs a citizenry with a common civic knowledge base as well as the civic skills and dispositions essential to informed, respectful debate. Yet knowledge about our government and our common history has eroded, even among college students. Current law prohibits a college or university receiving state funding from granting a bachelor's degree or a lesser degree or academic certificate to a student unless the student earns six semester credit hours or its equivalent in American history, with partial satisfaction of these hours allowed for Texas history courses.

Concerns have been raised about the narrow scope of some of the history classes that currently count towards this requirement providing a less-than-comprehensive picture of history. S.B. 1889 seeks to reinforce the original intent of the American history requirement by specifying that only survey courses in American or Texas history can satisfy the six semester credit hour requirement. This proposal amends the Education Code to specify that the American history credit a student must have before that student may be granted a bachelor's degree or a lesser degree or academic certificate from a college or university receiving state support or state aid from public funds be from a survey course providing a critical and analytical review of American history.

C.S.S.B. 1889 differs from the filed bill by requiring institutions to offer survey courses to students that address the major themes of American history from the nation's founding onward. Students may take these survey history courses in order to satisfy the current requirement in statute.

C.S.S.B. 1889 also directs the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to develop the American History and Civics Project.

Through this project THECB, in partnership with institutions and educators, will be tasked with the responsibility of:

- (1) identifying essential knowledge and skills for robust learning outcomes in United States history;
- (2) incentivizing the creation of high-quality digital resources for these courses by the awarding of grants; and
- (3) implementing a professional development program to support United States history and government teachers across the state.

It is the intention that the American History and Civics Project contributes to the development of these survey courses at Texas institutions of higher education.

C.S.S.B. 1889 amends current law relating to measures to support public secondary and postsecondary American history and civics education, including the satisfaction of curriculum requirements in American History at institutions of higher education and the establishment of the American History and Civics Project.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 51.302(b), Education Code, as follows:

(b) Requires a college or university receiving state support or state aid from public funds to ensure that a student seeking a baccalaureate degree or a lesser degree or academic certificate may satisfy the American history course requirement by successfully completing survey courses that address the major themes of American history from the nation's founding onward.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.0519, as follows:

Sec. 61.0519. AMERICAN HISTORY AND CIVICS PROJECT. (a) Defines "project."

(b) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), in consultation with institutions of higher education, to establish the American History and Civics Project (project) to:

(1) strengthen American history and civics education at public high schools and institutions of higher education; and

(2) encourage the development and effective use of high-quality digital content and professional development materials for use in American history and civics education at public high schools and institutions of higher education.

(c) Requires THECB to convene an expert commission of scholars and educators to assist in the creation of the project.

(d) Requires THECB, using funds appropriated or otherwise available for purposes of the project, to award grants to individuals with relevant subject matter expertise, school districts, or institutions of higher education to recommend and develop digital content and professional development materials for use in American history and civics education at public high schools and institutions of higher education.

(e) Authorizes digital content recommended or developed using a grant awarded under Subsection (d) to include interactive and audiovisual resources, assignments, and model syllabuses that:

(1) address the major themes of American history from the nation's founding onward; and

(2) may be used in the delivery of survey courses offered by institutions of higher education, of dual credit or dual enrollment courses offered by public high schools or institutions of higher education, or of public high school courses for which students may receive credit that satisfies all or part of the requirements under Section 51.302(b).

(f) Requires THECB, to encourage the effective use of digital content recommended or developed using a grant awarded under Subsection (d), using funds appropriated or otherwise available for purposes of the project, to support the establishment of a professional development program for individuals who teach one or more American history and civics courses, including a dual credit or

dual enrollment course, at a public high school or institution of higher education. Authorizes the professional development program to include an annual statewide conference.

(g) Requires THECB to include in the state repository of open educational resources developed under Section 61.0670 (State Repository of Open Educational Resources) any digital content or professional development materials developed using a grant awarded under Subsection (d).

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2021.