

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 2136
By: Creighton
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

If American democracy is to thrive, our nation needs a citizenry with a common basic civic knowledge as well as the civic skills and dispositions essential to engage in informed, respectful debate. S.B. 2136 seeks to strengthen education in American history and civics across public high schools and public institutions of higher education and support teachers and faculty in identifying, developing, and implementing high-quality digital resources, expand opportunities for students across Texas to develop an understanding of the major themes of U.S. history and the development of the American system of government, and better equip students as knowledgeable, responsible citizens. The bill provides for the establishment of the American History and Civics Project to support the development and use of professional development materials for American history and civics education and to strengthen such education at public high school and institutions of higher education. The bill also provides for the satisfaction of certain curriculum requirements for a degree at an institution of higher education through completion of survey courses that address the major themes of American history from the nation's founding onward.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 2 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

S.B. 2136 amends the Education Code to require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), in consultation with public institutions of higher education, to establish the American History and Civics Project to strengthen, and 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.

S.B. 2136 requires the THECB to convene an expert commission of scholars and educators to assist in the creation of the project and to award grants, using funds appropriated or otherwise available for purposes of the project, to individuals with relevant subject matter expertise, public 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. Digital content recommended or developed using such a grant may include interactive and audiovisual resources, assignments, and model syllabuses that do the following:

- address the major themes of American history from the nation's founding onward; and
- may be used in the delivery of:
 - survey courses offered by institutions of higher education;
 - dual credit or dual enrollment courses offered by public high schools or institutions of higher education; or
 - public high school courses for which students may receive credit that satisfies all or part of the requisite six semester hours or its equivalent in American History for a baccalaureate degree, lesser degree, or academic certificate.

The bill requires a college or university receiving state support or state aid from public funds to ensure that a student may satisfy the requirement for six semester hours or its equivalent in American History by successfully completing survey courses that address the major themes of American history from the nation's founding onward.

S.B. 2136 requires the THECB, in order to encourage the effective use of digital content recommended or developed using a grant under the project and 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. The bill authorizes the professional development program to include an annual statewide conference. The bill requires the THECB to include in the state repository of open educational resources it develops and maintains any digital content or professional development materials developed using a grant awarded under the project. The bill authorizes the THECB to adopt rules necessary to implement the bill's provisions relating to the American History and Civics Project.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.