

# Senate Bill 584

Civic Learning in Grades 1-8: Creating Pathways for the Seal of Civic Engagement



# Monique Limón

REPRESENTING SENATE DISTRICT 21

## THIS BILL

SB 584 promotes civic learning in grades 1-8 to introduce the opportunity of achieving a State Seal of Civic Engagement in grades 11 or 12. Specifically, this bill:

- Requires current instruction under social sciences curriculum for grades 1-6 and 7-12 to include civic engagement experiences with governmental institutions.
- Expands the criteria for local education agencies to apply for the existing California Serves Grant Program under the California Department of Education to include grades 1-8 for professional learning and instructional materials on civic engagement.
- Creates a Civic Engagement Pathways Recognition Program to recognize demonstrated progress in civic education.

## BACKGROUND

The State Seal of Civic Engagement established by AB 24 (Chapter 2017, Statute of 2017), encourages the creation of pathways for students in secondary schools to become civically engaged in democratic governmental institutions at the local, state, and national levels.

Subsequently in 2020, the State Board of Education adopted criteria and guidance to award the State Seal of Civic Engagement, which is recognized as a seal that can be affixed to student transcripts, diplomas, or certificates of completion.

"In its first year, 5,369 seniors in the class of 2021 received insignias — a little more than 1% of graduates."<sup>1</sup> Since 2020, 28,030 Seals of Civic Engagement have been awarded to 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

According to a 2024 study on civic literacy, two thirds of Americans say they studied civics in high school. Only a quarter of them say they are "very confident" they could explain how our system of government works.<sup>2</sup>

It is imperative we introduce students early to civic education and systems of government to create clear pathways towards a lifetime of civic engagement.

## PURPOSE

SB 584 furthers existing law by creating pathways for students in elementary and secondary schools to become civically engaged in democratic governmental institutions at the local, state, and national levels. This bill aligns with current social studies curriculum frameworks.

This bill begins to close the gaps in civic education between students in 1<sup>st</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades and encourage students to become active participants in their communities and government. Civic education provides students with critical thinking and collaboration skills, including the tools to improve their communities. Civic education also positively impacts school attendance, academic achievement, and suspension rates.

SB 584 empowers teachers to use existing civic learning resources available for teachers to integrate civic programming into curriculum across various subject areas. In addition, this bill expands the criteria for applicants of the California Serves Grant Program, which was established to make resources available to local education agencies for professional learning and instructional materials in civic education for high school students, to also include grades 1-8.

<sup>1</sup> <https://edsources.org/2022/districts-offer-special-honor-to-encourage-active-civic-engagement/667062>

<sup>2</sup> [New Study Finds Alarming Lack of Civic Literacy Among Americans | U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation](#)

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This bill is modeled after the Biliteracy Pathway Recognition, which recognizes P, K – middle school students who have demonstrated progress toward proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one or more languages in addition to English. This recognition is an entry for biliteracy or multiliteracy, thus preparing students to earn the State Seal of Biliteracy as graduating seniors. SB 584 will create a similar pathway for civic learning, thus preparing students to earn the State Seal of Civic Engagement in high school.

## SUPPORT

Sacramento County Office of Education (Co-Sponsor)

Los Angeles County Office of Education (Co-Sponsor)

## OPPOSITION

None on File

## STAFF CONTACT

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