

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: SB 445

52nd Legislature, 1st Session, 2015

Tracking Number: .199322.1

Short Title: Gov't Literacy as Elective & Dual Credit

Sponsor(s): Senators George K. Muñoz and Mimi Stewart

Analyst: Travis Dulany

Date: February 24, 2015

Bill Summary:

SB 445 amends:

- higher education law to include an interactive government literacy course as an eligible course within the state's dual credit program; and
- the *Public School Code* to include an interactive government literacy course among the courses that may be offered as an elective required for graduation.

Fiscal Impact:

SB 445 does not contain an appropriation.

Substantive Issues:

The bill analyses from both the Public Education Department (PED) and Western New Mexico University indicate that the term "interactive government literacy" is unclear and undefined. Nonetheless, provisions in current statute and rule provide for certain basic criteria:

- the *School Personnel Act* requires that any person teaching, supervising an instructional program, or providing instructional support services in a public school or state agency shall hold a valid license or certificate from PED, which means that the instructor of the interactive government literacy course will be licensed by the department if the course is offered by a high school as an elective; and
- PED rule requires certain standards of rigor for dual credit courses, including stipulations that:
 - college courses eligible for dual credit shall meet the rigor for postsecondary institution credit and be congruent with the institution's academic standards;
 - dual credit courses offered in high school settings shall conform to college academic standards; and
 - course requirements for high school students enrolled in dual credit courses shall be equal to those of regular college students.

Also, indicating the need for instruction in government, PED cites the following research from Indiana University's Center for Civic Literacy:

- 36 percent of Americans can name the three branches of government;
- fewer than half of students in grade 12 can define “federalism”;
- 35 percent of teenagers recognize “We the People” as the first three words of the US constitution; and
- 5.0 percent of high school seniors can define the United States’ system of checks and balances.

Background:

Provisions in current statute require, among other units, completion of seven and one-half elective units in order to receive a Diploma of Excellence. Some elective course offerings are mandatory, while others are optional:

- the following *shall* be offered as an elective:
 - student service learning; and
 - financial literacy; and
- the following *may* be offered as an elective:
 - pre-apprentice programs; and
 - media literacy.

Graduation requirements in current statute also require three and one-half units in social science, which include US history and geography, world history and geography, government and economics, and one-half unit in New Mexico history.

The social studies Standards for Excellence in PED rule state that, among other items, high school students should be able to:

- explain and analyze how water is a scarce resource in New Mexico, both in quantity and quality;
- analyze the factors influencing economic activities (e.g., mining, ranching, agriculture, tribal gaming, tourism, high tech) that have resulted in New Mexico’s population growth;
- analyze how cooperation and conflict are involved in shaping the distribution of political, social, and economic factors in New Mexico, the United States, and throughout the world (e.g., land grants, border issues, United States territories, Israel and the middle east, the former Soviet Union, and Sub-Saharan Africa);
- compare and contrast the structure and powers of New Mexico’s government as expressed in the Constitution of the State of New Mexico with that of the United States constitution, including:
 - direct democracy in the initiative, referendum, and recall process;
 - the impeachment process;
 - the process of voter registration and voting;
 - the role of primary elections to nominate candidates;
 - how a bill becomes a law;
 - executive officers and their respective powers;

- New Mexico courts, appointment of judges, and election and retention processes for judges; and
- organization of county and municipal governments; and
- describe and analyze the powers and responsibilities (including the concept of legitimate power) of local, state, tribal, and national governments.

Committee Referrals:

SEC/SPAC

Related Bills:

SB 2 *Tribal College Dual Credit Program Fund*
SB 14 *Computer Programming for Language Credit*
SB 229 *Remove Requirement for Certain School Classes*
SB 496 *Career Tech Education Courses as Electives*
SB 564 *Tribal College Dual Credit Program Fund*
HB 345 *Gov't Literacy as Elective & Dual Credit (Identical)*