
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: SB 596 **Hearing Date:** April 26, 2017
Author: Stern
Version: March 30, 2017
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** No
Consultant: Lynn Lorber

Subject: State Board of Education: student member: school elections

SUMMARY

This bill authorizes a high school to hold an election where the student body may vote to nominate a student or students to be considered for appointment as a student member of the State Board of Education (SBE).

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the Governor to appoint a student member to the SBE, with the advice and consent of two-thirds of the Senate.
- 2) Provides that the term of office of the student member is one year, and is to begin on August 1. Existing law prohibits an individual from serving more than one term as a student member.
- 3) Requires the student member to be, at the time the member's one-year term begins, a student enrolled in good standing in grade 12 in a public high school.
- 4) Provides that the student member shall be a voting member with the full rights and duties of the other 10 members of the board.
- 5) Requires the student member to be selected from three students recommended by the SBE, and requires the process for selecting the student member to be as follows:
 - a) The SBE is required to notify every school district governing board, district superintendent, high school principal, high school student activities director, and student body president by September 15 of each year that applications are being accepted for the student member's position.
 - b) Applications for the student member's position must be submitted to the SBE by October 31 of each year.
 - c) A screening committee of the SBE is to select 12 semifinalists for the student member's position.

- d) The school district governing board student members select six candidates from the 12 semifinalists.
- e) The State Board of Education (SBE), by December 31 of each year, must select three finalists for the Governor's consideration and rank the finalists according to their preference. (Education Code § 33000.5)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Authorizes a high school, subject to authorization by the school administration, to hold an election where the student body may vote to nominate a student or students to be considered for appointment as a student member of the SBE in accordance with procedures to be determined by the school administrators.
- 2) States legislative findings and declarations relative to increased youth and millennial voter turnout being a key step to increasing future turnout for California and the nation as a whole, the need to build the habits of the next generation of citizens, and findings of the California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, "Various reports, statistics and actual election results bear out the fact youth and millennials are not actively engaged or participating in the democratic process – whether locally or statewide. Multiple educational, legislative, and organizational attempts continue to be made to address the current state of apathy among age eligible youth and millennial voters. It is imperative that the development of a comprehensive policy to civically empower the next generation of citizens be developed to address this issue. Without significant action to remove barriers to building the habits of the next generation of citizens, youth voter turnout disparities will persist, resulting in continued stagnancy in overall civic engagement and voter turnout rates."
- 2) ***California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning.*** California Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye and Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson formed the California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning in 2013 to chart the course for civic learning in California. The Task Force made several recommendations in their August 2014 report, such as to include civic learning in state assessment and accountability systems for students, schools and districts, and improve professional learning experiences for teachers and administrators, and provide access to existing professional learning experiences in civics to help them implement civic learning in schools.

The Power of Democracy Steering Committee, which was formed to guide and support the work of the Task Force and other civic learning initiatives, is under the leadership of the Chief Justice and include the State Superintendent of Public Instruction's principal advisor, representatives from all three levels of the California courts, state and local education organizations, and the State Bar and local bar associations. The Power of Democracy Steering Committee will work to

see that recommendations of the Task Force are implemented.

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/documents/cltffinalreport.pdf>

- 3) ***The Six Proven Practices in Civic Learning.*** According to the Education Commission of the States and the National Center for Learning and Civic Engagement, considerable research found that six core activities, known as the Six Proven Practices in Civic Learning, directly improve the quality and effectiveness of civic learning in schools. The Six Proven Practices are:
 - a) Classroom instruction in government, history, geography, law, democracy and economics, striking a balance between teaching important facts and documents, such as the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and demonstrating their relevance to today's society.
 - b) Discussion of current events and controversial issues, including their relevance to young people's lives.
 - c) Service learning experiences that are directly linked to curriculum and instruction and that give students a chance to apply what they are learning through informed civic action.
 - d) Extracurricular activities that give students opportunities to get involved in their schools, communities and local government and to work together toward common goals.
- 4) ***Other civic engagement and education efforts.*** California's new History–Social Science Framework, adopted by the State Board of Education in July, 2016, addresses civic engagement throughout the document. The Civic Learning Award for public schools, co-sponsored by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and California's Chief Justice, is designed to celebrate successful efforts to engage students in civic learning and to identify successful models that can be replicated in other schools. In February 2013, the SPI, Chief Justice, and a committee of civic leaders organized the Civic Learning California Summit: Making Democracy Work to examine successes and barriers to increasing civic literacy in California.
- 5) ***Related legislation.*** AB 24 (Eggman) establishes a State Seal of Civic Engagement, to be affixed to the diploma of qualifying high school graduates, based on a demonstration of excellence in civics education and participation. AB 24 is pending on the Assembly Floor.

AB 261 (Thurmond) deletes the authority for a school district governing board to include a student as a non-voting member of the district governing board, and instead provides that a student member of the governing board is to have preferential voting rights. AB 261 is pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SB 468 (Leyva) modifies the existing requirement that school district governing boards provide the student board member with materials presented to the board members to specify that the student members are to receive the materials at the

same time the materials are presented to the board members, and requires governing boards to invite the student member to staff briefings provided to board members. SB 468 is scheduled to be heard by this Committee on April 26.

SUPPORT

None received

OPPOSITION

None received

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