

Testimony on SB1071 - Civics Test Graduation Requirement

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee. I'm Karen Echeverria, Executive Director of the Idaho school Boards Association. I am here today to stand in opposition to SB1071.

First of all, I want to make clear that the ISBA is not opposed to the having all students take a Civics test in high school. It is important that all students understand the basics of United States democracy.

With that said, the ISBA has two concerns with this legislation. First of all, graduation requirements, for as far back as I could research, has always existed in State Board of Education Rule and not in statute. In fact, Section 33-118, Idaho Code states, "The state board shall prescribe the minimum courses to be taught in all public elementary and secondary schools, and shall cause to be prepared and issued, such syllabi, study guides and other instructional aids as the board shall from time to time deem necessary." This legislation would now include a graduation requirement in statute as opposed to rule.

Secondly, while the fiscal note indicates that there will be no fiscal impact to the state, there will be a fiscal impact to school district. This test will be administered online. The use of computer labs and teacher's aides for the administration will certainly have a fiscal impact on school districts.

Again, we are not opposed to this concept but we believe that the approach that is being taken with this legislation is misguided. We would suggest that this committee ask the State Board of Education to look into a possible rule amendment to include Civics testing and to include all education stakeholders in the crafting of this rule. The ISBA would be glad to participate in this committee.

For these reasons, the ISBA would ask that you hold SB1071 in Committee. With that, Mr. Chair, I am glad to stand for any questions.