

CO-SPONSORSHIP MEMORANDUM

To: All Legislators

From: Representative James W. Edming

Date: Friday, April 24th

Re: Co-sponsorship of LRB-1318, relating to: requiring the successful completion of the civics portion of a citizenship test as a condition for obtaining a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma.

Deadline: Friday, May 1st at 12 PM

A recent study¹ conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania found that only 36 percent of adults could name all three branches of government and another 35 percent could not name any. Only 27 percent of those surveyed knew that a two-thirds vote by both houses of Congress is needed to overturn a presidential veto. These results are nothing short of shocking.

To help counter this trend, I am introducing legislation that would require students at public, choice, and independent charter schools to pass a civics exam as a high school graduation requirement. Wisconsin high school students would take a simple, 100-question Immigration and Naturalization exam currently utilized by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services that would test their knowledge of government and history. A score of 60 would be needed for a student to pass and the test may be retaken until a passing score is obtained.

Wisconsin high schools should not only prepare students for higher education and careers, but should also help to instill the responsibilities of citizenship – including voting. LRB 1318 will help ensure knowledge of the United States and its government and foster greater civic participation within our students.

Similar legislation has already been implemented in Arizona and North Dakota and has been introduced in Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, and South Dakota.

For additional information, please refer to the analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau included below.

If you would like to co-sponsor this legislation, please contact Darla in Representative Edming's office at 6-7506 or reply to this email by Friday, May 1st at 12PM.

1. <http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/americans-know-surprisingly-little-about-their-government-survey-finds/>

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill requires a person to correctly answer at least 60 of 100 questions on a civics test, which is identical to the civics test required to be taken by persons seeking U.S. citizenship, as a prerequisite to obtaining a high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma. The bill prohibits a school board, the operator of an independent charter school, and the governing body of a private school participating in a parental choice program from granting a diploma to a pupil attending a public school, independent charter school, or participating private school unless the pupil has successfully completed the test. The bill permits the person to retake the test until the person has obtained a passing score. The requirement first applies in the 2016–17 school year.

For further information see the *state* fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.