

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Eighty-first Session
March 29, 2021**

The Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Moises Denis at 1:02 p.m. on Monday, March 29, 2021, Online. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Moises Denis, Chair
Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop, Vice Chair
Senator Roberta Lange
Senator Fabian Donate
Senator Joseph P. Hardy
Senator Scott Hammond
Senator Carrie A. Buck

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jen Sturm, Policy Analyst
Asher Killian, Counsel
Ian Gahner, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jhone Ebert, Superintendent, Department of Education
Karla Phillips-Krivickas, Senior Policy Director, KnowledgeWorks
Filipe Avila, Blue Ribbon Commission
Hawah Ahmad, Clark County Education Association
Erica Valdriz, Vegas Chamber
Brenda Pearson, Ph.D, Clark County Education Association
Charlie Melvin, Cofounder, Power2Parent
Mary Pierczynski, Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Leonardo Benavides, Clark County School District
Rebecca Garcia, President, Nevada Parent Teacher Association
Lindsay Anderson, Washoe County School District
Erik Van Houten, Equipo Academy
Annika Dowling, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada

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Annette Magnus, Executive Director, Battle Born Progress
Chris Davin, Executive Director and President, Equality Nevada
Chris Daly, Nevada State Education Association
Sarah Cirillo
Stephen Barney
Alexa Aispuro, Youth Organizer, League of Conservation Voters
Matthew Dang, Chairperson, Southern Nevada Asian Pacific Islander Queer Society
Kerry Durmick, State Director, All Voting is Local Action Nevada
Emily Persaud-Zamora, Executive Director, Silver State Voices
Eric Jeng, Asian Community Development Council
Brady McGill, President, Las Vegas Pride
Andre Wade, Director, Silver State Equality
Matt Alder, Nevada Homeschool Network
Sarah Nick, Department of Education
Elvira Diaz, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada

CHAIR DENIS:

We will open the hearing with a work session for Senate Bill (S.B.) 173.

SENATE BILL 173: Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR S-1003)

JEN STURM (Policy Analyst):

The work session document packet ([Exhibit B](#)) has been submitted for S.B. 173. This bill was presented to the Committee on March 17 by Senator Dondero Loop.

SENATOR LANGE:

I am curious about the money flow. Are we giving a chunk to the school districts? Do we wait to see how many people enroll and then give an amount based on that number to the school districts?

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

The money will come from the American Rescue Plan. It will come to the State and then flow to the school districts. Each school district has been identified with a certain amount of money. The districts will be asked to spend at least a portion of it, if not all, on summer school. The federal government will also provide guidelines.

SENATOR HARDY:

Does the funding provided by the federal government make this bill's fiscal notes go away?

MS. STURM:

Fiscal notes are submitted during the introduction of a bill and do not account for amendments later.

ASHER KILLIAN (Counsel):

I can confirm what Ms. Sturm said. Fiscal notes are given on the bill as introduced and would not account for any amendments. While the bill allows for federal money to be used for these purposes, the bill is written broadly enough so there is flexibility to use any federal money that comes in. This is because the bill was drafted before the American Rescue Plan was passed. This question might be better addressed by a money committee and a fiscal analyst in determining what extent the costs identified by these districts would be covered by the federal money we expect to receive.

SENATOR HARDY:

Are we talking about amend and do pass, and refer to the Finance Committee for this bill?

CHAIR DENIS:

We will amend and do pass, and the Finance Committee leaders will grab it if they decide to. I would assume they will. Senator Dondero Loop, have they talked to you about this?

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

They have not, but if the fiscal notes were applied before the bill was amended, the fiscal notes are not there anymore. Some of the fiscal notes are listed as zero, and some of them have an account of money available. If those fiscal notes stood, the Chair of Finance may grab this bill, but if the notes go away, then S.B. 173 would go straight to the Floor.

SENATOR HARDY:

The rural counties seem to think there is going to be a discrepancy between what money they get before and what they get now with the amendments. I do not want to put them into a position where we are passing something on to

them without them being able to meet it. Does the federal money come to the school district, or does it come to the State and we divide it up?

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

Each school district was been allocated a certain amount. Not all small school districts have a fiscal note. We do not have a fiscal note from Storey, Pershing, Mineral, Nye, Lyon, Lander, Eureka and Churchill Counties.

JHONE EBERT (Superintendent, Department of Education):

The funds that are coming in from the American Rescue Plan come to the State first. Of those funds, 90 percent go to the school districts based on a formula from the federal government. From the 90 percent, 20 percent must be spent on learning loss. Summer school is one of those items that would fit into that category.

SENATOR HARDY:

Will each fiscal note from Lincoln, Humboldt, Douglas and White Pine Counties go away because the federal government will give us enough money to make them disappear?

MS. EBERT:

I cannot speak on behalf of the school districts. I can tell you that from the various Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds we will have nearly \$1.5 billion allocated for student success in our State. While meeting with the superintendents of school districts last week, they did indicate they are glad the funds are here and can see support for our children moving forward.

SENATOR HARDY:

I am concerned. We need to ascertain if those fiscal notes will go away or if my rural counties will not have money they think is coming. I will vote yes but reserve my right to change my vote on the floor.

CHAIR DENIS:

I will entertain a motion on S.B. 173.

SENATOR LANGE MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS AS AMENDED
S.B. 173.

SENATOR DONATE SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR DENIS:

We will move to the work session for S.B. 342.

SENATE BILL 342: Revises provisions relating to higher education. (BDR 34-845)

Ms. STURM:

The work session document packet ([Exhibit C](#)) has been submitted for S.B. 342. This bill was presented to the Committee on March 24 by Senator Denis.

CHAIR DENIS:

There was a question from Senator Hardy concerning residency.

SENATOR HARDY:

My question was not limited to residency but to medical students being able to access Renown's and others' medical programs. When we have medical students from other locations, such as Roseman University of Health Sciences in Henderson, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and others, are they able to go to Renown for clinical rotations? This would be before residency. It is always nice to go to the place you want to go for residency.

I had a conversation prior to this meeting with Renown. Officials assured me they would accept students from other institutions. Dr. Thomas Schwenk, Dean of the School of Medicine at the University of Nevada, Reno, was effusive in saying he wants everybody for recruiting purposes. Renown wants everybody because the administrators want to hire and use these individuals to improve the access to health care. The questions I had were answered.

SENATOR DONATE:

I know this bill is more intended for the University of Nevada entirely and the Board of Regents. I am wondering how this bill would affect other schools wanting to enter into a partnership with Renown in the future, but I fully support S.B. 342.

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CHAIR DENIS:

I will entertain a motion on S.B. 342.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP MOVED TO DO PASS S.B. 342.

SENATOR HAMMOND SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR DENIS:

Senator Dondero Loop, I will have you do the Floor statement for S.B. 173, and I will do the Floor statement for S.B. 342. I will close the work session on S.B. 342.

VICE CHAIR MARILYN DONDERO LOOP:

I will open the hearing on S.B. 215.

SENATE BILL 215: Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-181)

SENATOR MOISES DENIS (Senatorial District No. 2):

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting shift to distance learning, this bill seeks to modernize certain requirements related to alternative scheduling and distance education. As society evolves and current processes are challenged, we strive to adapt our methods and perspectives to meet new demands. That mindset has resurfaced by what we have experienced over the past year with distance learning and its corresponding challenges.

Earlier this Session, we heard presentations by school districts and others on how distance learning truly became a necessity for more students than ever before. Going forward, we need to ensure that Nevada's system allows for the flexibility needed to support student success no matter where their classroom is or their style of learning. Last fall, Nevada's Department of Education (NDE) convened the Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) for a Globally Prepared Nevada, which brought together a diverse group of education stakeholders to examine and adjust the current policy framework to meet today's learning conditions.

Senate Bill 215 carries the recommendations developed by the Commission. This bill has three main pillars. Those elements address distance education plans, plans to improve access to technology and flexibility in instructional time. First, beginning in section 2, S.B. 215 requires school districts and charter schools to develop and present plans for distance education and share those plans with their communities, families and school staff. Second, to ensure all students and staff have access to the technology and connectivity necessary to participate in education, section 2 also requires identification of students, teachers and other school staff who do not have access to all the technology necessary to participate in a program of distance education and develop a plan to make that technology available to those individuals. Third, S.B. 215 provides flexibilities in how students and educators accomplish their work.

Section 3 allows for students who demonstrate progress in a distance education course to complete the course in a shorter period of time. Section 1 provides flexibilities for the calendar use by districts by removing certain limitations on alternative scheduling. Section 2 also allows the school districts to include their own model curriculum in an application for distance education.

I want to address the fiscal impact of this bill. Some of those impacts were included based on interpretation of what the districts are required to do. We will talk to those groups to determine if the fiscal notes need to remain or not.

MS. EBERT:

As we know, Covid-19 has been a turning point for education. Within the NDE, we are committed to seizing this opportunity to pave the way to a better future. This bill does exactly that. Student mastery is more important than how much time a student spends in a seat. We want a future where students learn in culturally responsive environments where they see themselves in the learning materials, and their differences are valued and celebrated. We want a future where all students graduate with the tools they need to build a home, a life, and a future, and they are globally prepared.

As Senator Denis mentioned, S.B. 215 is based on the work of the BRC. I convened the BRC last fall, and I am proud of the great work they have done in a short period of time. We pulled together a diverse group of stakeholders with two key purposes. At the start, we wanted to recommend updates and flexibilities in statute that reflected the ways districts and schools adapted during Covid-19. As the work progressed, we moved toward a more visionary

goal, future-proofing Nevada's education system. The BRC's charge was to make recommendations to adjust our current policy framework to meet today's learning conditions while also leaving room for policies that will support innovation for the next 10 to 20 years.

When looking at students from high-, middle- and low-income zip codes, while their progress on math achievement was almost completely in alignment between January and March of 2020, since the school buildings across the Nation closed, students from low-income zip codes are making significantly less progress than before. Students from high-income zip codes are making remarkably more progress than before the building closures. This means that as we plan for recovery and renewal next school year, we need to be thinking differently on how we group our students in classes and cohorts. Competency-based education enables us to meet students where they are and support them through success. Moving away from seat time to mastery has never been more important in this moment.

The NDE has a proposed amendment ([Exhibit D](#)) to S.B. 215 which carries additional recommendations from the BRC.

KARLA PHILLIPS-KRIVICKAS (Senior Policy Director, KnowledgeWorks):

The BRC membership represented many key stakeholders. When we began this work, I thought it was going to take some time to get the members up to speed on issues and agreement on key principles. I could not have been more wrong. The BRC members came in ready, willing and able, and prepared to work from day one. Early on, the members narrowed in on two key foundational agreements. One is a commitment to equity. Regardless of what direction they went, the members wanted to make sure that was always a priority. Second, there was an assumption of funding.

The topics that quickly bubbled up to the top are virtually identical to what we have heard across the Country. The traditional conception of learning has been defined by time, place and the number of minutes spent in the traditional classroom. The pandemic shutdown of schools has shattered that image. The flexibility that schools needed was clearly seen across the Country in executive orders, emergency directives and waivers. The traditional policy foundation did not allow schools to react quickly to the crisis, nor does it provide the space to innovate as we move forward. As the BRC's report noted, the pandemic has elevated issues long overdue for discussion. For the Commission members, the

issues were bucketed into instructional programs, times, schedules and calendars. That was the circle from which we proceeded in our first meetings.

Quoting from the Commission, a general theme was that:

A myriad of programs, once referred to as nontraditional, are rapidly becoming permanent fixtures of the everyday educational landscape in Nevada. Where nontraditional pathways were once considered alternatives for students who struggled in more traditional programs, we now understand that a diverse set of program offerings is required to truly meet the needs of every student. Examples of these are distance learning, competency-based learning, personalized learning, project-based learning, independent study and work-based learning.

One of the key recommendations is rather than having individual, unconnected program approval processes and requirements, Nevada schools need a unified method for determining how they will provide rich pathways for students to move forward.

With regard to scheduled time and calendars, the Commission sought to formalize flexibility that was provided during this past year. The members also wanted to make clear there is no desire to limit instructional time. Often, and this is true across the entire Country, I will hear schools say, "We need to get rid of seat time or deal with seat time." Especially in light of the learning loss that has happened this year, there is nobody who is desiring to limit instructional time. If anything, there is a recognition of the urgency to address the learning loss and widening achievement gaps of this past year.

This year spotlighted the inability of traditional, time-based measures of attendance to equate to measures of learning. The BRC's top priority is to find every way possible to meet the needs of students during this unprecedented time while creating systems that will be more resilient and nimble for the future.

As the discussions progressed, it was clear the type of systemic changes the Commission envisions need time to develop. While the members are formulating the new system recommendations, the BRC requested the extension of flexibility during the pandemic, many examples of which you are hearing in S.B. 215 and in the amendment, [Exhibit D](#). The Commission is now properly

poised to begin the next phase of work, which is to begin developing long-term policy recommendations.

FILIFE AVILA (Blue Ribbon Commission):

I am a junior at East Career and Technical Academy in the Clark County School District (CCSD). I am enrolled in the Certified Nursing Assistant program at East Tech, where I have found an interest in public policy and public health. I have been fortunate at my school to have the opportunity to select a pathway tailored to my interests and to participate in career-connected learning. Not everyone in Nevada has the same opportunities I had. This bill seeks to bridge that inequality gap and will help expand the opportunity for flexible learning to other students across Nevada.

As a member of the BRC, it was amazing to see so many local and State leaders banding together, committed to helping students like me. It was clear the leaders in education truly wanted to hear from the other student participants and me about our experiences navigating our education in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, being a voice for students allowed me to represent thousands of other students across the State. While the Covid-19 pandemic has been difficult for everyone in our State, I am grateful our State leaders are focused on what we can learn from this experience to better help students recover and continue to grow in their education. I am proud S.B. 215 will help students across Nevada to have a personalized learning experience that supports them to meet their goals.

SENATOR DENIS:

It was a diverse group that met with the BRC. Student voices were very important in that process. Senate Bill 215 provides more flexibility needed to support our schools and students.

VICE CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

The amendment under [Exhibit D](#), section 2, subsection 6, paragraph (f) states, "On or before August 1 of each year, all county school districts and charter schools must implement their plan as developed under subsection 6 so that every pupil and educator has access to technology." Can you explain that plan to me? What kind of things will be involved?

MS. EBERT:

We were initially looking to follow two paths. One was technology and making sure it was readily available for the schools. Out of this came S.B. 66, which will cover devices, technology, bandwidth and students having access. We will be working closely with the school districts and the Governor's Office of Science, Innovation and Technology once that bill comes into play.

SENATE BILL 66: Creates the Nevada K-16 Connectivity and Innovation Advisory Commission. (BDR 34-430)

The other component that some people do not think about is learning at a distance and the tools and resources a child may need to participate. Even though students may have the opportunity to attend a school building, if they are learning from home there may be resources specific to their class they may not have access to. Examples of these resources could be art materials, special programs and the like.

SENATOR BUCK:

What are the districts saying about internet issues and lack of access for students?

SENATOR DENIS:

If we had this discussion a year ago, it would have been entirely different. Five years ago, we put in place a competency-based trial, but we were not ready to have the full discussion. The pandemic has changed the way people think about what we can do in education. This is the perfect moment.

MS. EBERT:

All the school districts were included in the work which transpired on this bill.

HAWAH AHMAD (Clark County Education Association):

We support S.B. 215. Though the Covid-19 pandemic made educators across the State, and especially Clark County, transition to distance learning with little notice, our educators have done everything they can to assess the challenges that have come with distance learning. As we return to in-person learning, we know two things to be true.

First, the digital divide created by the Covid-19 pandemic uncovered inequities in education between the haves and the have-nots—predominately, negatively

impacting students of color and students in lower socioeconomic brackets. Second, to bring Nevada's K-12 education system into the modern age, we must have significant investments from our stakeholders and taxpayers to provide infrastructure and training.

However, when we live in what is supposed to be the greatest country in the world, we must ask why we do not already leverage technology to help our students become innovators for tomorrow. We must ask why it has taken until 2021 to get competency-based learning to allow children to advance in their education. Because of Covid-19, we had to learn new tricks in record time. With additional training, investments in technology and infrastructure, and processes created for distance learning, Nevada may leverage technology to provide an education that focuses on and promotes growth.

ERICA VALDRIZ (Vegas Chamber):

We support S.B. 215. We believe this bill ensures Nevada students can continue their momentum and achievement through their completion of a course through distance learning. Especially during this day and age, having a plan of action to better improve distance learning is critical for our students. We believe providing the necessary technologies together with a plan for the communities, families and school staff will ensure student success. This bill encourages additional transparency between the parents or legal guardians, pupil, the teacher and school districts, especially in section 4.

BRENDA PEARSON, PH.D (Clark County Education Association):

I am speaking on behalf of a teacher named Grace Angel:

Hello, Vice Chair Dondero Loop and Committee members, my name is Grace Angel. I have been teaching in the CCSD for 20 years and currently serve as the technology learning strategist at Berkeley L. Bunker Elementary School. I am providing this testimony in support of S.B. 215 with particular focus to the following points as it pertains to students.

In section 1 and section 3, both changes offer students who are thriving the opportunity to move forward without hindrance. Often, courses are planned to span a semester. Students who complete coursework early, if allowed to, are often waiting in an online virtual limbo. Students should not be penalized for their own pacing

when taking distance education courses. Neither should they be held back. This bill in particular will ensure that this is not the case.

Again, I am in support of S.B. 215. This opportunity is applicable to those students who need to catch up or to get ahead in their learning. School systems have implemented timelines for student learning, and some students have the ability and motivation to move ahead with their learning at their own pace. Senate Bill 215 gives students the freedom to choose.

CHARLIE MELVIN (Cofounder, Power2Parent):

We support S.B. 215. We believe it is imperative to have legislation regarding distance learning, as it will better prepare our parents, students and teachers during times when distance education is necessary to implement. Further, offering a distance education option for families is important for different challenges that face families today. We appreciate section 3 of this bill and are grateful for the language to allow students to finish a distance education course early for those who excel in certain subjects. Lastly, identifying students who may not have sufficient technology in advance can prevent the problems that occurred at the beginning of the pandemic and close the technological gaps that exist among our students today.

MARY PIERCZYNSKI (Nevada Association of School Superintendents):

We support S.B. 215. Formulating the BRC has given stakeholders great opportunity to impact legislation. This bill is good. It gives students some flexibility.

LEONARDO BENAVIDES (Clark County School District):

We support S.B. 215. As this past year has shown, the world of education has forever changed as we shifted to a full-distance model. Even as we return to some form of in-person learning, distance education has forever become a part of the equation for how we will reach a subset of students. This is why CCSD's Superintendent Jesus Jara was a member of the BRC; to help ensure innovation is at the forefront of how we educate our students. Senate Bill 215 gives school districts the flexibility needed so instruction is not restricted to a set time on a calendar as we develop these new long-term distance education models that satisfy the learning needs for our diverse student population. Finally, we have officially requested to remove the fiscal note as this entails work the district is already undertaking.

REBECCA GARCIA (President, Nevada Parent Teacher Association):

I had the privilege to serve as a parent representative on the BRC. The pandemic has shone a light on many challenges in education. For more than 80 years, Nevada's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) mission has been to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. Nevada PTA supports S.B. 215.

The Nevada PTA would like to acknowledge Superintendent Ebert for proactively convening broad stakeholders to not just help our education system recover but look for innovative ways to improve and make our education system better. It is essential that instructional delivery models meet the needs of today's students and have the flexibility to adapt to changing needs of students and systems. Students need individual pathways of learning that allow them to graduate from Nevada's schools ready for a productive career and life. This bill addresses important needs including focusing on mastery versus minutes and relevant updates for distance learning options.

Any parent or educator will tell you that children are unique, and it is time our education system gives students the autonomy to pursue their education in a timeline and manner that works for them. Ensuring competency-based education and technology options are available is important to meeting the diverse needs of our students. This bill is a starting step toward ensuring all Nevada's students have equitable, personalized learning pathways to receive high-quality education that will benefit not just their own future but the future of our State.

LINDSAY ANDERSON (Washoe County School District):

We support S.B. 215. Key members of our staff have been fully engaged in this work and provided technical expertise as members of the BRC. Continuing to build out the infrastructure we have developed through the pandemic as it relates to devices, connectivity, distance learning and other systems to help our students be successful, we need to keep that option going into the future. This bill is a step in that direction.

SENATOR DENIS:

As I mentioned earlier, the discussion today is a lot different than what we would have had a year ago. Five years ago, I had an opportunity to tour a school focused on competency-based education. That is when the light for me turned on because this was a school where kids got to move at their own pace. These students were not high achievers or necessarily low achievers; they were

just regular kids. In that environment, they were able to move at their own pace. In some places where they struggled, they had more time. In other places, they could go faster. That is what I envision for our Nevada kids. That is what this bill will do; it will help the students meet their individual needs, so they can learn in the way that is best for them. I am grateful for the work of the BRC and Superintendent Ebert allowing us to have this discussion.

VICE CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

I will close the hearing on S.B. 215.

CHAIR DENIS:

I will open the hearing on S.B. 194.

SENATE BILL 194: Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-676)

SENATOR ROBERTA LANGE (Senatorial District No. 7):

I am here to present S.B. 194, which establishes the State Seal of Civics and civics education. I also have Proposed Amendment 3147 ([Exhibit E](#)). The Education Testing Service issued an insightful report in 2012 calling out fault lines in our democracy. Civic education, voting behavior and civic engagement in the U.S. were examined. The report warns that many U.S. students lack an acceptable level of knowledge about civics.

In a national assessment survey, only about 25 percent of U.S. students show proficiency in civics. Specifically, only 27 percent of fourth graders could identify the purpose of the U.S. Constitution. Only 22 percent of eighth graders could recognize the role performed by the U.S. Supreme Court. In a national survey released by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation in 2018, it was found that only 36 percent of Americans can pass a multiple-choice test consisting of questions from the U.S. Citizenship Test, which has a passing score of 60 percent. In 2016, the Pew Research Center reported the U.S. voter participation came in thirty-first among 35 developed countries.

These dismal statistics show that not only is there a serious civic education problem in the U.S., the numbers should also renew our drive to address this issue now.

Why does it matter how many students lack this knowledge in their Country and its government? According to an Educational Testing Service report, civics knowledge promotes support for democratic values. The more knowledge we have about how our government works, the more likely we are to support the core values of democratic self-government. Civic knowledge promotes political participation. The more knowledge people have, the more likely they are to participate in civic and political affairs. The more knowledge we have about civic affairs, the less likely we are to have a generalized mistrust and fear of public life.

We are still learning about the far-reaching impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic worldwide. It appears the pandemic has only amplified the polarization in politics. Just after the 2020 presidential election, the Pew Research Center reported that more than three in four Americans said the Country was now more divided than before the outbreak. While many can argue the different reasons why politics have become so polarizing, I think everyone can agree that civility and an educated populace is critical in addressing some of the issues at their source. People who are civics educated and engaged have improved critical thinking skills and can filter through the information that is out there.

Sections 2 and 3 of S.B. 194 establish the State Seal of Civics Program to be awarded to high school students with a high level of proficiency in civics and outline the requirements to earn this Seal. We struck section 4 with the amendment in [Exhibit E](#). Section 5 requires the State Superintendent to adopt regulations that will allow the Superintendent to designate a school as a School of Civic Excellence, designate a pupil as a Student Civic Leader or designate a school employee as an Educator Civic Leader. Section 6 was deleted with the amendment in [Exhibit E](#). Section 7 requires the School Superintendent to establish the Pupil Civic Advisory Panel. The Panel will submit recommendations to the Superintendent and the Legislature on changes to social-civics education. The Panel is also made up of students and adults. Section 8 requires results of the civics exam administered to high school students to be reported to the NDE.

Sections 9 and 10 add civics to the list of subjects included within social studies—one of the core academic subjects outlined in *Nevada Revised Statutes*—and requires the corresponding establishment of standards, content and performance. These sections also speak about a service learning project that will be required by the year 2027. Section 11 includes additional communities in the list of communities whose culture, history and contribution

must be examined within the standards of content and performance for ethnic and diversity studies.

In conclusion, I would like to include remarks from U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, "securing our democracy requires teaching the next generation to understand and respect our system of government." Senate Bill 194 is an important step in helping to ensure more civically educated and engaged children graduate from our schools.

ERIK VAN HOUTEN (Equipo Academy):

I teach twelfth grade advanced placement U.S. government and politics. When we think of civics education, we have to think about what our end goals are. What are we trying to achieve? I would say we want to achieve a strong democracy where we have citizen participation, and we want to have trust in the democratic process. To get to that point, we need our students to have content knowledge and ways to act on that knowledge.

The law we have requires a civics test that I gave this year. The law is a little ambiguous. There is no required score to pass, and teachers are left to their own devices to make a 50-question; multiple-choice assessment identical to the civics portion of the naturalization test. The naturalization test has fewer questions and is done orally. Senate Bill 194 clears this up by creating a pass score of 85 percent. That would qualify a student on the path to get the State Seal on Civics. That is the content knowledge.

The second component of S.B. 194 and the part I am most excited about is the service learning requirement. This is the action component. I have been having my students complete an action civics project for years now. This is the part where students are in the driver's seat of their own learning, and they choose how they will become civically engaged in their community. Students have led voter registration drives, brought politicians and government officials into the classroom, and have been poll workers. They have also done research on proposed legislation in this Legislative Session and have emailed representatives about it. Some of you likely have those emails sitting in your inbox right now.

These action civics projects work. Students become invested in them, and the results speak for themselves. The class of 2020 at Equipo Academy that just graduated had 100 percent of students who were eligible to vote by the time they graduated. Our student turnout in the Democratic caucus was two times

higher than the State average. In the June 2020 primary, our student turnout rate was 25 percent higher than the State average. Action civics, or service learning projects, work. They allow students to apply their knowledge while strengthening their community. Senate Bill 194 includes content knowledge requirements coupled with action. These are the ingredients necessary for strong civics education. It takes Nevada in the right direction.

CHAIR DENIS:

Over the last few sessions, we have added civics education pieces to statute. What kind of things are you making better with this bill as we move forward?

SENATOR LANGE:

We can look back at the last few years and understand why we think this is important to our children and the Nation. A lot of us had civics education in school. We learned to value each ethnicity and to value people as a whole. Some of that education has fallen apart in recent years. Our kids are not getting the connection between government and them. By doing a project where the students have to go out into their community and work, they get that connection. When they leave school, they will have learned something that will take them further in their lives and be able to use as adults.

MR. VAN HOUTEN:

The service learning component is essential. We now have our content knowledge and are applying it to the real world. I have seen students take that to the next level and create opportunities that help them out in the future. It makes it seem like the democracy is there for them to be a part of.

SENATOR LANGE:

When I was doing campaign work years ago, I would have students come to my campaigns. They came with a sheet of paper to keep track of a certain number of work hours, and we could teach them the process of how someone they were volunteering for was working to get elected. It was a valuable process not only for the kids but for the staff.

CHAIR DENIS:

The other part in this is the seal is something they can work toward.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I have a question on the amendment presented in [Exhibit E](#). In section 7.3, subsection 1, paragraph (b), it says the Superintendent of Public Instruction will decide on the members that will be appointed. How do you envision that happening? How will the recruitment go?

SENATOR LANGE:

I put a lot of thought into this. In this Committee, we have heard in testimony on previous bills how people were not showing up to committees and were not involved. Looking at a civics course, what kind of people would you want to have on the Board? I came up with the list as I thought about these things. You will notice I put members from the Nevada Youth Legislature on the list because those are kids already doing this kind of work and should have some input.

There are a couple ways the Superintendent would recruit people to be on these committees. First, you could notify the school district. The school district can send the message out. You can talk to people in the business community. You probably will get more people than you have room for because it will be such a worthwhile committee with an end goal to create a civics program within social studies.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

Did you and the Superintendent identify who would be on this Committee?

SENATOR LANGE:

No, I did not have a conversation with the Superintendent on the makeup of the Committee. I looked at *Nevada Revised Statutes* and modeled the Committee makeup from what is already in existing law.

SENATOR BUCK:

What specific curriculum or textbook will be provided to homeschooled children? Will parents have access?

SENATOR LANGE:

The school districts in partnership with NDE create their curriculum. The transparency is there, and we are not trying to hide anything. A parent will be able to communicate with the district and teacher to discuss curriculum for their children.

SENATOR HAMMOND:

I put my name on S.B. 194 because I think this is a great bill. There is a lack of civic education in Nevada. We can always strive to do more. I like the fact you brought a teacher into this presentation today. I am glad you are talking about transparency in curriculum. Looking at section 7.7, which talks about the Pupil Civic Advisory Panel and what the members will be tasked with, it says they are to create and maintain a strategic learning plan, identify learning activities, develop the criteria a pupil must meet to be awarded a State Seal and apply for grants. When you are talking about this Panel, do you envision this as a plan everyone has to follow exactly as stated, or will the plan be more of a guideline? Will there be latitude on how to accomplish the goals set? For example, will the service project requirement be clearly stated about what a student has to do and where?

SENATOR LANGE:

I see the Panel as an advisory panel. Members can come up with a skeleton of what should occur, but one of the great things about teaching is the creativity a teacher and student have. There will be guidelines on what needs to be met, but how they do it will be up to the teacher and student. Students will be more engaged if they have a say in what they are going to do for their service project.

SENATOR HAMMOND:

I have heard that people believe this is the next to proscribing exactly how to teach social studies. Some people believe this is a way to somehow indoctrinate. It is not the way I saw the bill, but I wanted to make sure we had an explanation of this section.

Intent is important for people to understand what a bill is trying to do. We are creating an avenue for students to take ownership of something that will allow them to be enriched in their own Country and community and feel that civic pride of being a part of something. This advisory group is there to create a skeleton. They will give you the bones—the structure—and then the students and teachers will complete the body how they see fit. They are participating in something worthwhile.

ANNIKA DOWLING (Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada):

We support S.B. 194. As a Black woman, I did not have the opportunity to learn about civics and politics until I was much older. I had seen and experienced the adverse effects of my own community's ignorance of how civics participation

worked. Once I learned this as a young adult, I made it my mission to become involved and encourage others to do so as well. This is especially true for my young daughter with whom I share all I have learned and continue to learn about civics and participating in and shaping our government.

I firmly believe that a well-rounded civics education would promote greater electoral participation and help garner a more proactive culture of community engagement. As it stands right now, youth voters tend to have a considerably low turnout compared to their older cohorts because of the lack of information regarding our political process, platforms and procedures. There is also much skepticism concerning whether their vote truly matters. I believe by passing S.B. 194 we can educate young voters about the voting process. Our government works. It is our duty to provide students with an opportunity to learn more about the voting process before they are eligible to vote to help us increase their participation when they are eligible. These students are our future. We owe it to them to educate and create a path to participate.

ANNETTE MAGNUS (Executive Director, Battle Born Progress):

We are in strong support of S.B. 194. Studies have shown that adolescent civic engagement leads to greater socioeconomic status in adulthood. Our K-12 schools are uniquely positioned to reach all young people with diverse backgrounds. By providing civics education to students, we better prepare them to participate in our democracy. That is what we should all want—more participation. As someone who went through the CCSD, I was lucky enough to have amazing teachers who helped shape the work I have the privilege to do every day. We can and should be doing more for our young people. Our goals should always be empowering our young people to learn about the political process and get involved. Please pass S.B. 194.

CHRIS DAVIN (Executive Director and President, Equality Nevada):

We support S.B. 194 to bring Nevada in line with five other states that have revised their statutes to include the teaching of various backgrounds in history for our youth. In all five states—Illinois, Oregon, California, New Jersey and Colorado—the statutes were revised to include the teachings of those of Pacific Islander, Chicano, Latino and Middle Eastern descent, as well as women, people with disabilities, immigrants or refugees, and people of the LGBTQ communities that have made notable history.

Our youth need to be educated about all people and not just the standards of what was decided in past years. Times are changing. With your support we can make history and establish Nevada the sixth state to update the teaching of history in schools. We would like this language to be added and updated so teachers can start to include people in various backgrounds in history to be taught in class.

The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network estimates that one in ten educators in the U.S. identified as LGBTQ. All youth and adolescents have the fundamental right to be represented and feel safe in their school environment, yet many do not because of their sexual orientation and gender expression. Research indicates by developing lessons that avoid bias and include positive representation of LGBTQ people, history and events, students report increased connections to the school community. Additionally, inclusive curriculum benefits all students by prompting diversity and teaching them about the various identities and contributors within their communities.

CHRIS DALY (Nevada State Education Association):

We support S.B. 194, creating a State Seal in Civics Program and to be more inclusive in the study of culture, history and contributions of diverse American communities. A high-quality public education system is foundational to build and maintain an engaged democratic society. A renewed focus on student civic engagement is a critical component in this work. The creation of the State Seal in Civics Program provides student recognition and promotes the importance of civics. We also support updating the list of communities to be included in ethnic and diversity studies that have contributed so much to Nevada and across the Country. This includes Pacific Islander Americans, Chicano and Latino Americans, Middle Eastern Americans, women, persons with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, and persons who are LGBTQ.

SARAH CIRILLO:

I am calling due to the fact that while many who share my fundamental political beliefs want to imagine this is a bill regarding identity politics, I am here as a transgender female who is out and very proud of my standing in this community and the world to say S.B. 194 is not about identity politics. It is about allowing those to see the world and the U.S. as it is today. The narrative of the Founding Fathers is important and our history cannot be denied, but moving forward S.B. 194 will allow all those who are stakeholders in the U.S. and Nevada understand they have a place at the table and a place in the discussions as to

where we are going as a society and who they are as a people. It is imperative this bill gets passed so generations moving forward are not left behind, mired in the past.

STEPHEN BARNEY:

I am an educator teaching middle school in Las Vegas and support S.B. 194. Our students are growing up in a world filled with people of all different identities and cultures. If the goal of education is to prepare students for the world they are about to enter, whether in a university setting or straight to the workforce, they need to be exposed to these cultures in high school. For students who identify with various marginalized identities, seeing themselves represented in the classroom and in the content they are learning can be incredibly impactful. It allows them to build connections with their past, celebrate their heritage and feel their voices matter in education. As a person who identifies as LGBTQ and a teacher who has LGBTQ students, I can say this bill would reaffirm their experiences and make them feel accepted. So often that is not the case with topics being seen as taboo or controversial. This leads to a lack of understanding and bullying coming from other students or even staff members. With this bill, students will be given the opportunity to learn and understand, leading the way to a more accepting and safer school.

ALEXA AISPURO (Youth Organizer, League of Conservation Voters):

I support S.B. 194. This bill would give public high schools and charter schools the option to opt into a program that would require civics education in their institution. As someone who works closely with high school students, I have had one-on-one conversations where they say they do not believe in voting, they do not know the importance of doing so and some believe the only election that matters are the presidential elections.

During the times I would register students to vote, there were many instances where students in the classroom did not fill out their voter registration forms because of the lack of general information about the process. Many students did not know how to vote, where to vote and why even vote. There is a huge disconnect with our students and the importance of participating in our democracy. It is up to us to ensure we are giving the resources needed to our future generations to have a voice in our democracy and stand up for what they believe in. By passing S.B. 194, we are ensuring future generations have access to this information that is vital to an equitable democratic process that allows

Black, Indigenous and people of color have a seat at the table and be represented by people who look like them.

MATTHEW DANG (Chairperson, Southern Nevada Asian Pacific Islander Queer Society):

As an educator, I support S.B. 194. In order to foster more active citizens, students need to learn more about the diverse histories of people in this Country. As a person of color who is also a teacher, I cannot emphasize enough the importance for students in high school to have understanding of various cultures before they graduate. In Nevada where we have so much diversity, it is important for students to be aware of other cultures that exist outside of their zip code.

I am often the first Asian person my students have interfaced with. As a result, they have lots of questions about my identity and culture. Sometimes these questions were microaggressive. Through my profession, I do not take offense and try to use this opportunity to teach them so they know and do not insult other Asian people they may interact with in the future. Over 10 percent of the Las Vegas population identify as Asian or Pacific Islander.

As a queer educator, I believe that all students need to be made aware of people who identify as LGBTQ. Studies have shown these populations tend to experience higher rates of bullying and mental health issues. Schools can be traumatic places for these individuals who may not be open about who they are for fear of retaliation. Students also learn more about LGBTQ people who have been vital to the development of Nevada and beyond.

KERRY DURMICK (State Director, All Voting is Local Action Nevada):

We are in strong support of S.B. 194. This bill provides Nevada students with a well-rounded civics education which would promote greater electoral participation among young voters and help to garner a more proactive culture of community engagement. Studies have shown that adolescent civil engagement leads to greater status in adulthood. Voting, volunteering and activism at a young age has been linked to more years of schooling, higher personal income and fewer depressive symptoms in adulthood. Many young voters are uneducated about the voting process, how government works and the responsibilities of elected officials. It is important we provide students an opportunity to learn about voting before they are eligible to vote.

EMILY PERSAUD-ZAMORA (Executive Director, Silver State Voices):

I am calling on behalf of our voting rights coalition, Let Nevadans Vote. Today we stand in support of S.B. 194 because 20 years from now, the legislative members in your seats will be the students who would be affected by this piece of legislation. Part of our work at Silver State Voices is working with our partners to register Nevadans to vote, educating them on our political process, getting them out to vote and protecting the ability of Nevadans to vote through our election protection program.

Many of our partners work very closely with the Nevada immigrant communities and assist a large number of folks with their naturalization process including the United States Citizen and Immigration Services assessment required for all new U.S. citizens. Senate Bill 194 would administer the same assessment to participating high school students. If naturalized citizens are required to pass this test as a threshold for their naturalization, it would seem appropriate for our up-and-coming and youngest electorates to become exposed to the same process before being able to cast their ballots.

We often hear more experienced and well-informed voters complain that young people do not go out to vote, and they do not know what they are talking about. I ask this body of Legislators, what are your responsibilities for educating the next generation of Nevadans? This is your opportunity to ensure our children have the tools to be educated and in return become civically engaged. It is important to acknowledge our privilege of experiencing first-hand how democracy works.

I support S.B. 194 because while I know I will do everything to ensure my child is educated, I want to make sure his children have the same opportunity to become civically engaged.

MR. BENAVIDES:

We support S.B. 194. Now more than ever, it is important for students to be civically engaged and be an active part of their community. Providing the State Seal will help incentivize students to take the social studies courses they need while also participating in service learning projects. These projects will help students understand the needs of their community and instill a sense of belonging.

ERIC JENG (Asian Community Development Council):

We support S.B. 194. Nevada is home to over 250,000 Asian Americans and 40,000 Pacific Islanders. It is important to make this distinction because when we are talking about this bill including Pacific Islander as part of the communities, we in Clark County have the second-largest Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander population in the Country. This should be celebrated.

We have just celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the passage of the Twenty-sixth Amendment, which makes sure all voters can vote at age 18. That is a huge step. Whenever I get to address a civics or government class, I love to tell them about this event. We now have the responsibility to make sure students are well-prepared to exercise their civic duty. We need to make sure that as we grow we have the infrastructure to provide the same kind of civic education for our students.

On the community side, our Council provides critical resources and services, including youth programs such as college-readiness boot camps, graduation and youth outreach. During these programs, we mention the importance of civic education, voter participation and making sure their voices are heard. Last year, we saw unprecedented voter turnout for the Asian American and Pacific Islander community here in Nevada and Nationwide. From 2010 to 2016, the number of eligible Asian Pacific Islander voters rose 35 percent, which is triple the Statewide average. A well-rounded civics education would promote greater electoral participation, proactive engagement and generally make better citizens of our youth generation. There are strong signs of engagement among Asian youth in 2020 in large part because our young voters know how important it is.

BRADY MCGILL (President, Las Vegas Pride):

We support S.B. 194 and its proposed improvements to supporting diversity, inclusion and representation in our community.

ANDRE WADE (Director, Silver State Equality):

We are supportive of S.B. 194.

MATT ALDER (Nevada Homeschool Network):

With the striking of section 6 of S.B. 194, Nevada Homeschool Network and the homeschooling community we represent are neutral in regard to this bill.

SARAH NICK (Department of Education):
We are neutral on S.B. 194.

DR. PEARSON:

We are neutral on S.B. 194. This bill underscores the importance of civics education in high school. It brings civics to the forefront by connecting curriculum with community-based projects while offering college credit for those high school students who meet the criteria. Concerns remain, though, regarding the proposed implementation of S.B. 194. Service learning incorporates service into the learning process and if implemented appropriately connects the students with their community. Incorporating service learning programs in schools across Nevada assume the educators are well-versed in this pedagogy. This is often not the case. Legislators must not merely propose programs for implementation but must also ensure the quality implementation is prioritized. Quality implementation includes additional preparation and professional learning by both educators and schools, and at this time S.B. 194 has not addressed these components.

Additionally, Silver State students can earn college credits for being awarded a State Seal in Civics, but we must consider the content area in which the credits are earned. College credits must not be used to replace the foundational coursework required by college students. We ask the sponsors of this bill to consider including language delineating the content areas in which credits can be earned. The Clark County Education Association appreciates the intent of S.B. 194, and we believe in the benefit of introducing a State Seal of Civics Program to students across Nevada. To ensure this Program is as impactful as the sponsors have intended, it is essential we first prepare our educators with knowledge and practices of civics and service learning. We must prioritize the implementation of quality programs in Nevada schools. As written, S.B. 194 does not include the details necessary to create a high-yield learning opportunity for Nevada's students.

ELVIRA DIAZ (Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada):

I support S.B. 194. I am a resident of Sparks. Teaching our children to be engaged members of our democracy is our responsibility. I have a son who is transgender and a student of Sparks High School. I have been teaching him how to vote and engage people. He is very motivated in civics, but other children may not have the same motivation and may need to learn civics. We need to discuss these things in schools. We should not take the responsibility to teach

civic engagement lightly. Research shows that teens who are active in the community will enjoy a higher socioeconomic stance as an adult. Kids who volunteer are more likely to stay in school longer. I have seen many students who know less about American government than their parents who are immigrants and had to take the citizenship exam. It is important to pass S.B. 194 to ensure all our young people have the same chance to learn the joy of civic engagement.

SENATOR LANGE:

When my son was in fifth grade, his teacher decided the students would do a bill to bring to the Legislature that would make the wild horse the State Animal. During the process, I volunteered my time to go in once a week to teach the kids not only how a bill is made and goes through the Senate, but we taught the kids about civics. In the beginning, the kids had no questions. They did not have an idea what we were talking about. They went through the process of going out with a petition to get signatures. Each student was assigned a Legislator and called the Senator or Assembly person about the importance of this bill. We brought students to the State Legislature to testify before committees in both Houses. Unfortunately, two minutes before *sine die*, they lost their bid to have the bill passed by one vote. Nevertheless, it was a process those kids would never forget. In the beginning, they did not understand government at all. At the end of the process, I cannot tell you how many kids told me they wanted to run for office or go to college and be a teacher. We underestimate how important it is to teach civics to our children.

CHAIR DENIS:

I will close the hearing on S.B. 194. We will move to public comment.

MR. BENAVIDES:

For a good news minute, I am happy to share that both the Rancho High School Wind Ensemble and the Rancho High School Clarinet Choir in Clark County have made the national semifinals of the prestigious American Pride National Nonprofit competitions in the performing arts. This competition provides a benchmark success for professional collegiate and high school division.

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CHAIR DENIS:

Seeing no further comment, the meeting is adjourned at 3:11 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Ian Gahner,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Moises Denis, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit Letter	Begins on Page	Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
S.B. 173	B	1	Jen Sturm	Work Session Document
S.B. 342	C	1	Jen Sturm	Work Session Document
S.B. 215	D	1	Jhone Ebert / Department of Education	Proposed Amendment
S.B. 194	E	1	Roberta Lange	Proposed Amendment 3147