

Date of Hearing: June 19, 2019

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair  
ACR 87 (Quirk-Silva) – As Introduced May 2, 2019

**SUBJECT:** The Pledge for Democracy Through Our Public Schools

**SUMMARY:** Encourages California schools to pursue recognized designations that reflect the ethos and values described in this resolution, such as California Democracy School Civic Learning Initiatives, the California State Seal of Civic Engagement, and the California Civic Learning Awards. Specifically, **this resolution:**

- 1) States that American democracy is under threat.
- 2) States that a well-supported public education system is the foundation for assuring a well-educated and engaged citizenry.
- 3) States that public schools are foundational to upholding and sustaining American democracy by ensuring that future generations are fully prepared to function as informed citizens who value freedom and democracy in a civil society.
- 4) States that a healthy public education system is best served by principles of local, democratically elected officials who serve the public interest through the open and transparent use of public tax dollars.
- 5) States that it is the civic mission of the State's schools to prepare all young people to be informed, responsible, and actively engaged in civic life.
- 6) States that the Pledge for Democracy Through our Public Schools comprises five major tenets that promote an ethos of transparency and accountability; civic engagement for all students and community members; college, community, and local business collaboration; diversity, inclusiveness, and equity; and compassion, kindness, and wellness.
- 7) States that communities elect school board officials who must account for the well-being and progress of the school district's children and oversee the administration of public funds adhering to principles of accountability and transparency.
- 8) States that civic engagement combines values of inclusion, participation, transparency, accountability, and local knowledge.
- 9) States that civic engagement comprises processes and practices that foster student voice, civil dialogue, mutual understanding, creativity, critical thinking, and collective problem solving, while respecting individual autonomy and difference.
- 10) States that effective civic participation comprises the Six Proven Practices for Effective Civic Learning that include: classroom instruction in government, history, and economics; civic-based service learning aligned to the curriculum; simulations of democratic processes;

extracurricular civic projects; student participation in setting school policy; and civil discourse about important current events.

- 11) States that the Legislature encourages youth to be more engaged by revitalizing civic learning and participation in California through the State Seal of Civic Engagement, which allows students who develop a deeper understanding of civics through active engagement in their communities to receive an insignia on their high school diplomas.
- 12) States that school districts are required to develop a local control and accountability plan, a local participatory budgeting practice designed to foster inclusive democratic practices in prioritizing school district spending.
- 13) States that by forging intentional community partnerships, schools will strengthen their academic and career readiness capacity, student health and well-being, restorative justice practices, engagement of students, parents, and families, and community stakeholders as a democratic ecosystem.
- 14) States that a community that is engaged in the school promotes a school climate that is safe, kind, inclusive, and respectful, connects students to a broader learning community, and will help develop an informed, ethical, and educated citizenry, strengthen family and community ties, and nurture democracy in the 21st century.
- 15) Resolves that the Legislature endorses the Pledge for Democracy Through Our Public Schools as an affirmation of the social contract binding our hopes for the future potential of young people to advance our shared prosperity, tranquility, and liberty.
- 16) Resolves that the Legislature encourages, in the strongest terms, California schools to pursue recognized designations that reflect the ethos and values described in this resolution, such as California Democracy School Civic Learning Initiatives, the California State Seal of Civic Engagement, and the California Civic Learning Awards.
- 17) Resolves that the Legislature encourages all Californians to commit themselves to ensure implementation of the Pledge for Democracy Through Our Public Schools through their respective capacities as stakeholders and defenders of American democracy.
- 18) Resolves that publicly elected officials are encouraged to conduct themselves in ways that protect, maintain, and enhance the shared common good among the American people, and prioritize the equity, excellence, public accountability, and transparency of public schools and their administration by officials elected by the people in order to strengthen civic engagement and participation in civil society.
- 19) Resolves that the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) 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.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:**

*Need for the resolution.* According to the author, “ACR 87 puts into more certain terms the ideals and core values that are the underpinnings of our democracy, and how we can foster the goal of a more supportive and engaged citizenry, starting with our public schools.”

According to the author, this resolution is inspired by the California Democracy schools program being administered by the Los Angeles County Office of Education, a program aimed at increasing civic engagement at the public school level.

*Recommended Committee Amendments.* Staff recommends that the bill be amended to delete specific references to “The Pledge for Democracy Through our Public Schools.”

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

None on file

**Opposition**

None on file

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