

# Civics requirement to earn diploma is coming

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

**ENTERPRISE** — Implementing the civics requirement voted on by the Oregon House will be a piece of cake at Enterprise High School.

That's because it is already part of the required curriculum for a student to graduate at EHS.

The rest of the state will soon be in the same position after Senate Bill 513 passed the House by a unanimous 60-0 vote Monday, May 24.

The bill, which earlier passed the senate by a vote of 25-3 and goes into effect for the 2025-26 school year, requires that high school graduates in Oregon have at least one semester, or half a credit, of civics among the 24 credits needed to complete high school.

Tom Nordtvedt, social studies teacher at EHS, said that standard is already in place.

"Civics has been a graduation requirement at EHS for years," he said. "Implementing the new state requirement will be easy for us because we are already doing it."

In fact, he said, EHS will benefit from the fact that it will be a statewide mandate.

"That all students in the state will need to take it will help us out because in the past, when a new student transfers in, they often have not been required to take it in the school they are coming from. It makes it tricky to work it into their schedule. Now that all students in the state will take it, we will not have that complication."

The Oregon Capital Bureau reported that Dem-

ocratic Rep. Paul Evans, the chief sponsor for the bill, had tried three previous times to get the bill passed, and spoke on its importance.

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**"I LIKE THAT THEY ARE REQUIRING IT STATEWIDE BECAUSE IT IS IMPORTANT FOR KIDS TO LEARN AND KNOW CIVICS SO THEY CAN BE INFORMED CITIZENS, VOTERS, ETC."**

— Tom Nordtvedt, social studies teacher at EHS

the process of holding our schools accountable for teaching the next generation of Oregonians how to operate the most complex, complicated and often confounding form of self-governance in human history,"

Evans said.

Nordtvedt offered a similar take in approving the bill's passage.

"I like that they are requiring it statewide because it is important for

developments with the bill.

While he thinks there could be some good that comes from the bill, he also expressed some concern about what ultimately may come with the changing requirement.

"As with everything in the standardized world in education, they try to put a square peg in a round hole," he said. "Some of these requirements, because it is such a fluid transition and it is going to take a little bit of time, there is going to be some trepidation on my part to see what it entails. ... What kind of standardization? What kind of teaching standards are we going to apply? All our standards are arbitrary and culturally relative to your location."

He said the "nuts and bolts" of the bill will come out in the implementation process in the next few years. Lathrop added

he won't teach a topic that isn't applicable to his students.

He warned, too, that the details may not prove to be as good as they sound on paper.

"In everything that the state pushes down, especially with the standardization, they all sound great, just because they use certain terms," he said. "When you start actually dissecting it, sometimes it maybe even isn't feasible. It's a decent bill, something we can look at, but there is always the inevitable. My biggest worry is there is going to be cultural appropriation or cultural relativity that is going to be mandated."

"In my experience in education, any time there is flowery language, there is usually something ugly underneath. I'm hoping that's not the case."

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