

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 5583

FISCAL
NOTE

By Delegates Bell, Shamblin, Toney, Pritt, and

Stephens

[Introduced February 16, 2026; referred to the

Committee on Education]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding a new article,
 2 designated §18-36-1, §18-36-2, §18-36-3, §18-36-4, §18-36-5, §18-36-6, §18-36-7, §18-
 3 36-8, §18-36-9, and §18-36-10, relating to the creation of the West Virginia Seal of Civic
 4 Literacy Act; providing for a short title; setting forth legislative findings and purpose;
 5 providing for definitions; establishing the program; providing for administration and
 6 implementation; providing for recognition and use of the seal; setting forth rulemaking
 7 authority; providing for cost and funding; providing for severability; and providing for an
 8 effective date.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 36. WEST VIRGINIA SEAL OF CIVIC LITERACY ACT.

§18-36-1. Short Title.

1 This article shall be known and may be cited as the "West Virginia Seal of Civic Literacy
 2 Act."

§18-36-2. Legislative Findings and Purpose.

1 (a) Legislative Findings. - The Legislature finds that:

2 (1) A constitutional republic depends upon an informed and civically literate citizenry
 3 capable of understanding the structure, principles, and responsibilities of government;

4 (2) Civic knowledge promotes informed voting, peaceful civic participation, respect for the
 5 rule of law, and engagement in local, state, and national affairs;

6 (3) West Virginia already requires students to complete civics coursework and participate
 7 in a state-required civics assessment as a condition of graduation;

8 (4) Recognizing exceptional achievement in civics education encourages academic
 9 excellence and signals the value of civic knowledge to students, families, postsecondary
 10 institutions, employers, and the broader community; and

11 (5) Other academic seals and distinctions have proven effective in motivating student
 12 achievement and recognizing subject-matter mastery.

13 (b) Purpose. - The purpose of this article is to:

14 (1) Establish a formal Seal of Civic Literacy awarded to students who demonstrate
15 exceptional mastery of civics;

16 (2) Encourage deeper understanding of the United States Constitution, the Constitution of
17 West Virginia, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship;

18 (3) Provide students with a meaningful academic distinction that may be used for
19 postsecondary education, employment, scholarships, and civic recognition; and

20 (4) Promote civic education as a core component of public education in West Virginia.

§18-36-3. Definitions.

1 For purposes of this article:

2 (1) "Department" means the West Virginia Department of Education.

3 (2) "State-required civics assessment" means the civics examination required by the State
4 of West Virginia for high school graduation, as established by statute or State Board of Education
5 policy.

6 (3) "Seal of Civic Literacy" means an official recognition awarded by the State of West
7 Virginia to a student who meets the requirements set forth in this article.

8 (4) "Eligible student" means a public high school student enrolled in a West Virginia public
9 school or public charter school who has completed required civics coursework.

§18-36-4. Establishment of the Seal of Civic Literacy.

1 (a) There is hereby created the West Virginia Seal of Civic Literacy.

2 (b) The Seal of Civic Literacy shall be awarded to any eligible student who:

3 (1) Completes all state-required civics coursework; and

4 (2) Achieves one of the following:

5 (A) A score of ninety percent (90%) or higher on the state-required civics assessment;

6 (B) A score of four or five on the Advanced Placement (AP) United States Government
7 and Politics examination;

8 (C) A score of four or five on the Advanced Placement (AP) United States History
9 examination; or

10 (D) A final grade of 90% or higher in a dual credit United States History or United States
11 Government course offered through an accredited institution of higher education.

12 (c) The Seal of Civic Literacy shall be:

13 (1) Affixed to the student’s high school diploma or diploma supplement, transcript, or other
14 official academic record, as determined by the Department; and

15 (2) Recognized as an official academic distinction of the State of West Virginia.

16 (d) The Seal of Civic Literacy shall not replace or alter any existing graduation
17 requirements.

§18-36-5. Administration and Implementation.

1 (a) The Department shall:

2 (1) Develop the design, format, and official insignia of the Seal of Civic Literacy;

3 (2) Establish uniform procedures for verifying student eligibility and awarding the seal;

4 (3) Provide guidance to county boards of education and public charter schools regarding
5 implementation; and

6 (4) Ensure that the seal is awarded consistently and fairly across all public schools in the
7 state.

8 (b) County boards of education and public charter schools shall:

9 (1) Identify students who meet the requirements of this article;

10 (2) Submit verification of eligible students to the Department in a manner prescribed by the
11 Department; and

12 (3) Ensure that eligible students receive recognition of the Seal of Civic Literacy prior to or
13 at graduation.

§18-36-6. Recognition and Use of the Seal.

1 (a) A student awarded the Seal of Civic Literacy may:

2 (1) Include the seal as an academic honor on college, scholarship, military, or employment
3 applications; and

4 (2) Be recognized at graduation ceremonies, awards programs, or other academic events.

5 (b) The Department is encouraged to:

6 (1) Promote awareness of the Seal of Civic Literacy among institutions of higher education,
7 employers, and scholarship organizations; and

8 (2) Publicly recognize schools that demonstrate strong participation and achievement in
9 civic education.

§18-36-7. Rulemaking Authority.

1 The State Board of Education may promulgate rules in accordance with applicable
2 provisions of state law as necessary to implement the provisions of this article.

§18-36-8. Costs and Funding.

1 (a) The Seal of Civic Literacy shall be implemented using existing resources of the
2 Department to the greatest extent practicable.

3 (b) The seal may consist of a printed certificate, diploma sticker, transcript notation, or any
4 combination thereof, as determined by the Department.

5 (c) Additional costs associated with the design, printing, or distribution of the seal shall be
6 minimized and may be funded through:

7 (1) Existing appropriations;

8 (2) Partnerships with nonprofit civic education organizations;

9 (3) Private donations;

10 (4) Grants available for civics education initiatives; or

11 (5) Federal or state competitive education funds, where permissible by law.

12 (d) Nothing in this section shall require county boards of education or public charter
13 schools to incur significant new costs.

§18-36-9. Severability.

1 If any provision of this article or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid,
 2 such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the article that can be given effect
 3 without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this article are
 4 declared to be severable.

§18-36-10. **Effective** **Date.**

1 This article shall take effect on July 1 following its passage and approval.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to provide for the creation of the West Virginia Seal of Civic Literacy Act.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.