



# State Civics Requirements in 2024

---

Sophia Craiutu and Jed Ngalande

## INTRODUCTION

---

Which states in 2024 require their high school students to study civics? Is it possible that some do not? In those that do, what is required: a semester, full-year civics course, or more? What states insist that their students show evidence of having learned something about civics by passing a test in the subject? And what sort of test?

There is current widespread interest in the challenges of civics education, great concern about how little today's young adults seem to know about the subject, and much contention around what exactly civics education should consist of. Yet it's been surprisingly hard to get reliable and up-to-date information about state requirements. Sources abound, but often data are incomplete or out of date, and we frequently find inconsistent information in the various sources as well as differing judgment calls as to what constitutes evidence of having learned civics. (For this purpose, we hew to tests.)

So we set out to see if we could pull the data together in one place, outlining the differences among states, and do our best to ensure that it is current as of autumn 2024. Under the aegis of the Hoover Institution's Working Group on Good American Citizenship and its Center for Revitalizing American Institutions, we examined multiple sources in search of definitive answers to two straightforward questions:

- What are each state's civics course-taking requirements for high school students?
- What tests or exams in civics, if any, does each state require its high school students to take or pass before graduating?

We also examined efforts by organizations such as the Joe Foss Institute—prompted by evidence that most natural-born citizens would fail the naturalization test that the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) requires immigrants to pass in order to become citizens—to encourage states to require their students to pass that very test as a condition of high school graduation.<sup>1</sup> We found that the majority of states with civics-test requirements derive their tests from USCIS—much as the Joe Foss team intended (see the USCIS Test

Requirements section below). But eleven states have civics testing requirements unrelated to the USCIS test.<sup>2</sup>

## IN BRIEF

The following is a summary of state student civics requirements as of 2024 (also see table 1):

- Ten states require neither a standalone civics course nor a test for high schoolers.<sup>3</sup>
- Five states require a full-year civics course and the taking of a civics test.<sup>4</sup>
- Nineteen states require a half-year civics course and the taking of a civics test.<sup>5</sup>
- Fourteen states and the District of Columbia have a civics course requirement but no test requirement.<sup>6</sup>
- Two states have no course requirement but require students to take a civics assessment.<sup>7</sup>

## REQUIREMENTS BY STATE, 2024

---

The following lists each state's civics education and testing requirements.<sup>8</sup>

Alabama requires a half-year course in government or civics, in addition to the taking of a civics test. Students must correctly answer 60 out of 100 questions on the USCIS test.

Alaska has neither a standalone civics course requirement nor a test requirement.

Arizona requires a half-year course in government or civics, as well as passage (70/100) of the USCIS test, beginning with the graduating class of 2026.

Arkansas requires a half-year course in government or civics, as well as passage (60/100) of the USCIS test.

California has no standalone civics course requirement (although a required class in Principles of American Democracy is built into the social studies curriculum) and does not require a test to be taken or passed.

Colorado requires a half-year course in government but does not require a test to be taken or passed.

Connecticut requires a course in government or civics (with no specific time requirement) but does not require a test to be taken or passed.

**TABLE 1** STATE CIVICS EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

	<b>No civics course</b>	<b>Civics course: unspecified duration</b>	<b>Half-year course</b>	<b>Full-year course</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>No civics test</b>	10 states: Alaska California Delaware Kansas Maine Massachusetts New Jersey Rhode Island Vermont Wyoming	1 state: Connecticut	11 states + DC: Colorado Georgia Hawaii Illinois Iowa Minnesota Montana* Nebraska New York Oregon South Dakota DC	2 states: New Mexico North Carolina	24 states + DC
<b>Non-USCIS civics test (not required to pass)</b>	1 state: Pennsylvania		1 state: Washington	1 state: Maryland	3 states
<b>USCIS civics test (not required to pass)</b>			2 states: Indiana South Carolina		2 states
<b>Non-USCIS civics test (required to pass)</b>			5 states: Florida Michigan Mississippi Ohio Texas	3 states: Louisiana Virginia West Virginia	8 states
<b>USCIS civics test (required to pass)</b>	1 state: Wisconsin		11 states: Alabama Arizona Arkansas Kentucky Missouri Nevada New Hampshire* North Dakota Oklahoma Tennessee Utah	1 state: Idaho	13 states
<b>Totals</b>	12 states	1 state	30 states + DC	7 states	50 states + DC

\* Montana encourages, but does not mandate, high schools to make students take the USCIS exam.

† New Hampshire further requires schools to create a local, competency-based assessment for students on civics, but the state's education department does not review these tests or their results.

Delaware has neither a standalone civics course requirement nor a civics-specific test requirement. However, civics is built into the social studies curriculum, and students must pass the Delaware System of Student Assessment in Social Studies.<sup>9</sup>

Florida requires a half-year course in government or civics, as well as passage of the Florida Civic Literacy Exam, which requires more in-depth knowledge than does the USCIS test.

Georgia requires a half-year course in government or civics, but there is no testing requirement.

Hawaii requires a half-year course in government or civics but does not require a test to be taken or passed.

Idaho requires a full-year course in government or civics, as well as passage of the USCIS test. If a pending rule is ultimately passed by the legislature, students can take the test any time after grade 7 until they pass it, with individual districts selecting questions from the test and determining their own passing scores.

Illinois requires a half-year course in government or civics, but there is no test requirement.

Indiana requires a half-year course in government or civics and also requires the completion of a portion of the USCIS test; however, students must take but do not have to pass the test.

Iowa requires a half-year course in government or civics, but there is no test requirement.

Kansas has neither a standalone civics course requirement nor a test requirement.

Kentucky requires a half-year course in government or civics (starting with the 2025-26 freshman class), and passage (60/100) of the USCIS test.

Louisiana requires a full-year course in government or civics, as well as passage of the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) civics assessment, which requires more in-depth knowledge than does the USCIS test.

Maine has neither a standalone civics course requirement nor a test requirement.

Maryland requires a full-year course in government or civics, and students must take the state test. Although students do not need to pass the test, 20 percent of their course grade is determined by their score.

Massachusetts has neither a standalone civics course requirement nor a test requirement for high schoolers. There is, however, a full-year civics course for middle schoolers.

Michigan requires a half-year course in government or civics and passage of the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress high school social studies assessment.

Minnesota has a new requirement starting in 2025–26 for a half-year government and citizenship course, but there is no longer a test requirement.

Mississippi requires a half-year course in government or civics, and high school students must pass the US history subject test, which includes some civics.<sup>10</sup>

Missouri requires a half-year course in government or civics and passage of a state civics test it describes as “similar” to the USCIS test, with 100 questions.

Montana requires a half-year course in government or civics, and students taking the USCIS test is encouraged for public high schools across the state, although it is not required.

Nebraska requires a half-year course in government or civics and has no mandatory test, although it requires high school students to attend a public hearing, write a paper about a civics-based holiday, or take and pass the United States citizenship test to graduate.<sup>11</sup>

Nevada requires a half-year course in government or civics and an exam consisting of a minimum of 50 questions pulled from USCIS (with passing rates determined by schools).

New Hampshire requires a half-year course in government or civics, and students must pass a “locally developed competency assessment” in civics, as well as pass the USCIS exam (70/100), in order to graduate.

New Jersey has neither a standalone civics course requirement nor a test requirement.

New Mexico requires a full-year course in government or civics, but there is no required test.

New York requires a half-year course in government or civics. Although there is no formal testing requirement, the state requires students to obtain the New York State Seal of Civic Readiness through a “point-earning” system involving options to complete a research or similar project.

North Carolina requires a full-year course in government or civics, but there is no required test.

North Dakota requires a half-year course in government or civics, in addition to passage (70/100) of the USCIS test.

Ohio requires a half-year course in government or civics, and students are required to take the state’s end-of-year assessment on American Government to graduate.

Oklahoma, beginning in 2025, requires a half-year course in government or civics and passage of the USCIS test (60/100, with unlimited retakes), as well as passage of the US history content portion of the College- and Career-Readiness Assessment.

Oregon requires a half-year course in government or civics, but there is no required test.

Pennsylvania has no standalone civics course requirement, but students must take (with no obligation to pass) the Act 35 Civic Knowledge Assessment.

Rhode Island has neither a standalone civics course requirement nor a test requirement, although students must complete a civics project in either middle or high school.<sup>12</sup>

South Carolina requires a half-year course in government or civics, in addition to completion of the USCIS test (with no requirement for a minimum score).

South Dakota requires a half-year course in government or civics, but there is no required test.

Tennessee requires a half-year course in government or civics and requires the passage (70 percent) of an USCIS-derived test of at least 50 questions.

Texas requires a half-year course in government and also requires students to pass the US history State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness assessment, which includes 10 randomly selected USCIS questions.

Utah requires a half-year course in government or civics, in addition to passage (35/50) of a civics test derived from USCIS.

Vermont has neither a standalone civics course requirement nor a test requirement.

Virginia requires a full-year course in government or civics, as well as the passage of an end of course assessment for civics and economics.

Washington requires a half-year course in government or civics. Students must also take (but need not pass) a classroom-based assessment (administered by teachers) in grades 4 or 5, 7 or 8, and 11 or 12, the results of which the state uses to track proficiency and monitor trends.

West Virginia requires a full-year course in government or civics, and the passage of an American history and civics test consisting of 25 multiple-choice questions.

Wisconsin has no standalone civics course requirement, but students must pass (65/100) the USCIS test.

Wyoming has neither a standalone civics course requirement nor a test requirement.

The District of Columbia requires a half-year course in government or civics, but there is no required test.

## **USCIS TEST REQUIREMENTS**

In 2015, the Joe Foss Institute started urging states to require high school students to pass the USCIS naturalization test or something very similar before graduation. As of 2024, to the best of our knowledge, fifteen states require that their students answer some or all 100 of the USCIS questions, or similar questions based on the USCIS test; thirteen of those states require that students pass such a test in order to graduate.<sup>13</sup> Here we sketch the evolution of those requirements chronologically.

### **Arizona (2016)**

Students graduating in 2016 or later are mandated to take all 100 questions on USCIS and pass with a minimum score of 60. Recent legislation has updated the requirement so that students graduating in 2026 or later must pass the test with a minimum score of 70. However, even though schools must use the questions used by the USCIS, they may modify the answers allowed for a particular question.

### **Idaho (2016)**

Beginning in the 2016–17 school year, students are required to take and pass a test constructed from the USCIS questions. Format, test length, and passing scores vary by district. Students may take the test any number of times between 7th and 12th grade.

### **North Dakota (2016)**

Starting in fall 2016, high schoolers are required to answer all 100 of the USCIS questions and pass with a minimum score of 70 (60 for the class of 2017 only).

### **South Carolina (2016)**

Students who began high school in 2016 or later are required to take a test of all 100 questions provided by USCIS. The state does not require them to pass such a test, but individual districts may recognize students who achieve the USCIS passing score.

### **Utah (2016)**

Beginning in 2016, high school graduates and those seeking an adult education secondary diploma are required to take a civics test comprising 50 of the questions used by USCIS and to pass by answering at least 35 questions correctly.<sup>14</sup>

### **Missouri (2017)**

Any student entering 9th grade after July 1, 2017—with the exception of those attending private trade schools—is required to take a 100-question test with questions similar to that of the USCIS and pass with a score of 60.<sup>15</sup>

### **Tennessee (2017)**

Beginning January 1, 2017, high school students must take and pass a civics test of 50 or more USCIS questions. Specifically, districts can create their own tests but must use at least 29 questions on American government, 16 on American history, and 7 on “integrated civics.” Students must receive a minimum score of 70% to pass, and each school where every graduating senior of a given year scores 85% or higher is named a United States civics all-star school.

### **Wisconsin (2017)**

Starting in 2017, any student graduating from high school is required to take a test consisting of all 100 USCIS questions and pass with a minimum score of 65.

### **Alabama (2018)**

Beginning with the 2018–19 school year, Alabama high schoolers are required to correctly answer 60 of the 100 USCIS questions to graduate.

### **Arkansas (2018)**

Beginning in 2018–19, students seeking a high school or equivalency diploma must pass a USCIS civics exam with a minimum score of 60/100. The student may retake the exam as many times as necessary to receive a passing score.

### **Kentucky (2018)**

Beginning in July 2018, students must pass a civics test comprising the 100 USCIS questions with a minimum score of 60 to graduate from high school. They may retake the exam as many times as needed.

### **Indiana (2022)**

Each student enrolled in a credit-awarding US government course must take the USCIS naturalization exam, administered by the student’s high school. Students are not required to pass the exam in order to pass the course or to graduate, though schools must report how many test-takers score at least 60% and how many of those did so on the first try, suggesting an implicit target score of 60/100.

### **Nevada (2023)**

Public schools and charter schools must administer to students a test comprising at least 50 of the USCIS questions. Passing scores are left up to the schools, but schools must annually



aggregate the scores and report these to their district board of trustees. By the end of the calendar year, the boards of trustees report scores to the Nevada Department of Education.

### ***New Hampshire (2023)***

Effective July 1, 2023, students must pass a locally developed competency assessment in civics and also pass the 2020 USCIS naturalization test, all 100 questions, with a minimum score of 70% to graduate from high school. School districts must submit the results of both tests by June 30 of each year to the New Hampshire Department of Education.

### ***Oklahoma (2025)***

Beginning with the class of 2025, Oklahoma students must take the 100-question USCIS test and pass with a minimum score of 60.

## **OTHER STATES**

In Montana, each public high school is encouraged to provide a USCIS civics test to students at least once during their career, exempting students with an individualized education program on a case-by-case basis. The high schools may provide for as many retakes as it takes for students to correctly answer 70% of the questions. The state superintendent of public instruction is encouraged to annually publish a list of high schools whose graduating seniors each scored at least 70% on the United States civics test, and name these “civics all-star schools.”

For the school years 2017–18 through 2023–24, Minnesota required students to take a test comprising 50 of the 100 USCIS questions and answer at least 30 correctly, but it has since done away with the test requirement. From August 2016 to July 2024, Louisiana required students to take the USCIS test but has replaced these standards with the more rigorous LEAP civics assessment.

Legislation is pending in several states, including North Carolina and Mississippi, seeking to introduce USCIS test requirements to their school systems. The activist group known as Moms for Liberty is currently advocating that this be required by every state.

## **NOTES**

1. The Joe Foss Institute was founded in 2001 by Joe Foss, retired World War II general and former South Dakota governor. It merged with the Center for American Civics at Arizona State University on November 1, 2024.
2. The states are Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia.
3. The states are Alaska, California, Delaware, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wyoming. Delaware does, however, have a social studies curriculum that includes civics topics and a state social studies assessment given at grades 4 and 7, as well as an “end of course” assessment given for high school US history. Massachusetts requires a full-year civics course in middle school but

not high school. Rhode Island students must complete a civics project at some point during their middle or high school years.

4. The states are Idaho, Louisiana, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. Maryland requires students to take a full-year course and take a state civics test that counts for 20 percent of their grade; however, students do not need to pass the state test to fulfill the requirement.

5. States requiring that students pass the test are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, and Utah. Three states—Indiana, South Carolina, and Washington—require students to take a civics assessment but do not mandate students to pass the test.

6. The states are Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, and South Dakota. Nebraska gives students the options of attending a public hearing, writing a paper about a civics-based holiday, or taking and passing the USCIS test to graduate.

7. The states are Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Pennsylvania does not, however, require students to pass.

8. In addition to the resources provided with links for each state, data are sourced and cross checked from: American Bar Association, [“Civic Education,”](#) accessed December 2, 2024; CivxNow, [“Current State Policies,”](#) accessed November 25, 2024; CivxNow, [“Now Live: 2023 Civic Education State Policy Scan Results,”](#) September 28, 2023; and Sarah Shapiro and Catherine Brown, [“A Look at Civics Education in the United States,”](#) American Federation of Teachers, reprinted from *American Educator* (Summer 2018). The Education Commission of the States was consulted, but its information in this realm appears to be out of date.

9. The nonprofit organization iCivics, which promotes civics education, counts this as a civics assessment, but for purposes of this paper, we do not consider this test civics specific.

10. As iCivics does not count government courses as civics courses, its website lists Mississippi as not having a high school civics course.

11. To be clear, Nebraska mandates a civics assessment for their students but not necessarily a test.

12. Like Nebraska, Rhode Island mandates a civics assessment for high schoolers but not necessarily a test.

13. Montana “encourages” its schools to administer the USCIS test and sets a passing score (70/100) but does not require that this be done.

14. Students with disabilities may take an oral test of 10 of the USCIS questions and pass by answering at least six correctly.

15. Students with disabilities can be exempted on a case-by-case basis.



The publisher has made this work available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial license 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>.

Copyright © 2024 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University

The views expressed in this essay are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff, officers, or Board of Overseers of the Hoover Institution.

30 29 28 27 26 25 24      7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

---



### SOPHIA CRAIUTU

Sophia Craiutu is a high school senior in Bloomington, Indiana. She is the cofounder of an educational organization for K-8 students, Global Learners, and the director of NextGen Advocacy, a local government-sponsored program. She aims to pursue a career in international law while also working to advance US policy.



### JED NGALANDE

Jed Ngalande is a research assistant for the Hoover Institution's Working Group on Good American Citizenship. He is a graduate of Stanford University, where he studied biology and economics. He expresses a passion for civics and government as a beat reporter for the *Stanford Daily* and participation in the Intercollegiate Civil Disagreement Partnership Fellowship.



### **About the Working Group on Good American Citizenship**

Within the Hoover Institution's Center for Revitalizing American Institutions (RAI), the Working Group on Good American Citizenship seeks to craft and communicate policies and practices that nurture good citizenship in the constitutional democracy Americans inhabit—policies and practices that support the principles, convictions, character traits, and associations upon which liberty depends. Consisting of high-quality, nonpartisan research, analysis, and communications, our work is anchored to what Alexis de Tocqueville called “reflective patriotism” and seeks to cultivate in Americans young and old an affirmative attachment to the nation that Lincoln termed “the last best hope of earth.”

*For more information about this Hoover Institution initiative, visit us online at [hoover.org/research-teams/good-american-citizenship-working-group](https://hoover.org/research-teams/good-american-citizenship-working-group).*

**Hoover Institution, Stanford University**  
434 Galvez Mall  
Stanford, CA 94305-6003  
650-723-1754

**Hoover Institution in Washington**  
1399 New York Avenue NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-760-3200

