
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO ELECTIONS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that an understanding of
2 the nature of citizenship is crucial to the State's ongoing
3 democracy. Citizenship defines the boundaries of who
4 participates in the State's democracy and on what terms.

5 The legislature further finds that two-thirds of Americans
6 know at least one of the judges on the television show "American
7 Idol", but less than one in ten Americans can name the chief
8 justice of the United States Supreme Court. Additionally,
9 nearly three-quarters of Americans can name the "Three Stooges",
10 but less than half can name the three branches of government.

11 The legislature also finds that over a million immigrants
12 pass the civics portion of the Naturalization Test that is
13 administered by the United States Citizenship and Immigration
14 Services each year. The civics test is divided into three
15 topics with various subtopics: American government (the
16 principles of American democracy, the system of government, and
17 rights and responsibilities); American history (the Colonial



1 period and independence, the 1800s, recent American history, and
2 other important historical information); and integrated civics
3 (geography, symbols, and holidays).

4 The legislature further finds that the county government is
5 essential to the State's democratic self-governance. As noted
6 by Alexis de Tocqueville, "local assemblies of citizens
7 constitute the strength of free nations. . . . A nation may
8 establish a system of free government, but without the spirit of
9 municipal institutions it cannot have the spirit of liberty".

10 The legislature also finds that local governments are often
11 the source of innovative reform on wide-ranging policy matters
12 that are important to their constituents, which the legislature
13 may later adopt for the broader good of the State. To
14 paraphrase U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, a single
15 courageous local government may, if its citizens choose, serve
16 as a laboratory; and try novel social and economic experiments
17 without risk to the rest of the State. Municipalities have
18 enacted policy reforms on wide-ranging policy objectives,
19 including living wage laws, workers' rights, global warming
20 reduction, public financing of campaigns, trans fat regulations,



1 affordable housing, universal healthcare, environmental
2 protection, gay rights, and second-hand smoking.

3 The legislature additionally finds that county elections
4 are often an entry point into a career of public service.
5 Therefore, it is particularly important that candidates for
6 county office have an appropriate appreciation and understanding
7 of citizenship. The purpose of this Act is to require the
8 office of elections to establish a pilot program that requires
9 candidates for county office to take the civics practice test
10 published by the United States Citizenship and Immigration
11 Services.

12 This Act does not require those candidates to pass the
13 practice test, but it does require the office of elections to
14 publish whether each candidate passes or fails the practice
15 test.

16 SECTION 2. (a) Beginning on January 1, 2021, the office
17 of elections shall establish a pilot program requiring
18 candidates for county election to take the civics practice test
19 published by the United States Citizenship and Immigration
20 Services.



1 (b) The office of elections shall administer the civics
2 practice test published by the United States Citizenship and
3 Immigration Services to all candidates for county office.

4 (c) A candidate for any county office shall not have their
5 name printed upon any official ballot, in any county election,
6 unless the candidate completed the civics practice test
7 published by the United States Citizenship and Immigration
8 Services.

9 (d) The office of elections shall publish on its website
10 which candidates passed, and which candidates failed, the
11 practice test administered under subsection (b). A candidate
12 that correctly responds to sixty per cent or more of the
13 questions on the practice test administered under subsection (b)
14 shall be deemed to have passed the practice test. A candidate
15 that correctly responds to less than sixty per cent of the
16 questions on the practice test administered under subsection (b)
17 or a candidate that does not complete the practice test shall be
18 deemed to have failed the practice test.

19 (e) The office of elections shall submit a report of its
20 findings and recommendations, including any proposed



H.B. NO. 2575

1 legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior
2 to the convening of the regular session of 2025.

3 (f) The pilot program shall cease to exist on June 30,
4 2025.

5 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval
6 and shall be repealed on June 30, 2025.

7

INTRODUCED BY: 

JAN 23 2020



H.B. NO. 2575

Report Title:

County Elections; Civics Practice Test; Pilot Program

Description:

Requires the office of elections to establish a pilot program requiring candidates for county election to take the civics practice test published by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. Requires the office of elections to publish whether each candidate passes or fails the practice test.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

