

**IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
APRIL 15-16, 2026**

<b>TAB</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>SUPERINTENDENT'S K-12 UPDATE</b>	Information Item
<b>2</b>	<b>PROPOSED CIVICS TEST</b>	Action Item

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**APRIL 15-16, 2026**

**SUBJECT**

Superintendent's K-12 Update

**APPLICABLE STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY**

Idaho State Board of Education Bylaws (Operational Procedures) Section E.4.  
Idaho Code § 33-125, 125A, and 127

**BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Idaho State Board of Education bylaws establish the Superintendent of Public Instruction as responsible for carrying out policies, procedures, and duties prescribed by the Constitution of the State of Idaho and by Idaho Code or as established by the Board for all elementary and secondary school matters.

Debbie Critchfield was sworn into office as the Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction on January 2, 2023. She will update the State Board of Education on the Superintendent's priorities moving forward.

- 2026 Legislative and Budget Overview
- College and Career Competencies
- Math Standards Review

**BOARD STAFF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Informational item; no Board staff recommendations.

**BOARD ACTION**

This item is for informational purposes only.

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**SUBJECT**

Proposed Civics Test

**APPLICABLE STATUTE, RULE OR POLICY**

Idaho Code §33-1602

**BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

During the 2016 legislative session, the Idaho Legislature made updates to Idaho Code 33-1602, requiring a new Civics Test:

“Starting with the 2016-2017 school year, all secondary pupils shall show that they have met the state civics and government standards for such instruction through the successful completion of the “civics test,” among other requirements.”

Beginning that year, the Civics Test was “the 100 question United States citizenship/naturalization test.” The 2025 Idaho Legislature updated statute to redefine the civics test as a test developed by the State Department of Education (Department) with approval of the State Board of Education. This new requirement applies for the 2026-2027 school year.

The updated section of code outlines the content areas that must be covered in the test developed by the Department, as aligned with Idaho’s U.S. Government content standards, including:

- The influence of the history of Western Civilization on the founding of the American Republic, including Greek democracy, Roman republicanism, and the English political and legal tradition;
- The arguments presented in the Declaration of Independence;
- The governing principles at the foundation of the United States Constitution, including popular sovereignty, rule of law, federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances, judicial review, and majority rule and protection of minority rights;
- The role of the bill of rights in limiting the powers of government and protecting individual rights;
- The enumerated powers of the United States Congress, including appropriations, declarations of war, commerce, confirmations, necessary and proper clauses, and oversight and impeachment;
- The legislative process of how a bill becomes law;
- Article II of the United States Constitution as it relates to the executive branch and the powers of the president, along with the development and growth of administrative agencies;
- The function and development of the Electoral College;

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- The power of the judiciary as conferred by Article III of the United States Constitution and legal precedents that developed these powers;
- The functions, powers, interactions, and dynamic relationships among federal, state, local, and tribal governments, including the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution and legal precedent; and
- The organization and powers of state and local government as described in the Constitution of the State of Idaho, including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.”

This fall and winter, the Department convened a group of subject matter experts—similar in composition to the work group for Social Studies content standards—to assist in drafting the new Civics Test. This group also provided classroom perspectives on the implementation of the new test. The Department gathered additional input on implementation from Idaho’s Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for assessment on December 15, 2025, and March 25, 2026.

After approval of the new Civics Test, the Department will begin efforts to prepare educators to implement the new test next school year. The Department will issue a comprehensive testing guidance document, covering test administration, including scoring and achievement levels, exemplar answers, reporting, and alternative pathways for students who have special needs and/or require specialized instruction. Additionally, the Department’s content and curriculum team will distribute materials to support U.S. Government teachers and students in preparing for the new Civics Test.

**IMPACT**

School districts and public charter schools will need to make changes to implement this new requirement. The new Civics Test is more rigorous than the previous version, so educators may need to adjust instruction and assessment in high school U.S. History and U.S. Government courses to ensure students have the opportunity to learn all content covered in the test.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Proposed Civics Test

**BOARD STAFF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Board staff are comfortable with the proposed Civics Test and have confirmed that it meets the updated requirements in statute. Staff agree with the Department that implementation support will be key to ensuring districts and schools are prepared for the change.

Board staff recommends approval.

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**BOARD ACTION**

I move to approve the updated Civics Test, as developed by the State Department of Education, in compliance with Idaho Code 33-1602, for implementation in Idaho high schools for the 2026-2027 school year.

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_ Seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ Carried Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_



**Part #1, Short Answer: 12 Questions**

1. Define the concept of "democracy."
2. Explain how democracy applies to the United States.
3. Define the concept of a "republic."
4. Explain how the term "republic" applies to the United States.
5. Define the concept of "liberty."
6. Define the concept of "separation of powers."
7. Identify and explain three grievances against British rule from the Declaration of Independence.
8. Choose an amendment from the Bill of Rights. Explain how the amendment protects individual freedoms and limits government power.
9. How do the three branches of government check and balance each other's powers?
10. Explain the benefits of a bicameral legislature.
11. What are two responsibilities of U.S. citizens at the national level?
12. What are two responsibilities of U.S. citizens at the local or state level?

**Part #2, Multiple Choice: 38 Questions**

*Historical and Theoretical Foundations of the American Republic*

13. Which ancient civilization is most closely associated with the concept of direct democracy?
  - a. Egypt
  - b. Greece**
  - c. Rome
  - d. Babylon
14. Which concept from Roman republicanism most directly influenced the structure of the United States' government?
  - a. Rule by divine right
  - b. Direct representation
  - c. Separation of powers**
  - d. Separation of church and state
15. How did Magna Carta influence the eventual American government?
  - a. It created a model for direct democracy.
  - b. It justified taxation without consent.
  - c. It introduced concepts that would lead to a Bill of Rights.**
  - d. It strengthened the power of the king.
16. Which English political philosopher advocated the idea of natural rights and influenced the Declaration of Independence?
  - a. Rousseau
  - b. Hobbes
  - c. Machiavelli
  - d. Locke**

17. Which political idea most directly influenced the Founders to design a system of government with separate branches?
- Roman mixed constitution
  - English mercantilism
  - Montesquieu's theory of separation of powers**
  - Greek confederacies
18. According to the Declaration of Independence, where does government derive its power?
- The Constitution
  - The military
  - The consent of the governed**
  - Divine authority
19. Which statement best describes the relationship between a democracy and a republic?
- They are opposing systems of government.
  - A democracy is ruled by the people, a republic is ruled by the aristocracy.
  - A republic is a representative form of democracy.**
  - A democracy has no constitution, while a republic does.
20. The contradiction of democracy can best be described as:
- How to solve the issue of federalism
  - Deciding what powers belong to the legislative branch or the executive branch
  - Taxation without representation
  - The balance between majority rule and minority rights**
21. Which statement best explains the difference between the political philosophy of natural rights and classical republicanism?
- Natural rights emphasizes protecting individual rights, while classical republicanism stresses the responsibility of citizens to promote the common good.**
  - Natural rights supports rule by kings, while classical republicanism supports rule by elected representatives.
  - Natural rights rejects democracy entirely, while classical republicanism supports unlimited majority rule.
  - Natural rights focuses only on economic freedom, while classical republicanism focuses only on military power.

*Framing and Ratifying the U.S. Constitution*

22. Popular sovereignty is best defined as:
- Government based on tradition
  - Rule by the monarchy
  - Power is inherent within the people**
  - Military rule
23. How did the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation contribute to the call for a Constitutional Convention?
- It had no provision for trade regulation.
  - It overtaxed the states.
  - It lacked a system for federal education.
  - It could not raise a federal army or levy taxes effectively.**

**Debbie Critchfield, Superintendent of Public Instruction**

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24. The Great Compromise settled which major issue at the Constitutional Convention?
- Slavery
  - Bill of Rights
  - Presidential power
  - Representation in Congress**
25. In *Federalist 10*, James Madison warns that the primary threat to America's system of republican government is:
- Tyranny of the majority**
  - Overbearing federal government
  - Establishment of a monarchy
  - States will secede from the Union
26. Which of the following was the primary concern of the Anti-Federalists during the debates over the Constitution?
- It gave individual states too much power over the federal government.
  - It lacked a Bill of Rights.**
  - There was no separation of powers.
  - It was too democratic.

*Article I: Legislative Authority*

27. Which power is specifically granted to Congress by the Constitution?
- Declare war**
  - Appoint judges
  - Enforce laws
  - Interpret the Constitution
28. According to the Constitution, in what branch of government must revenue bills originate?
- Senate
  - President
  - House of Representatives**
  - Administrative State
29. Which of the following is a constitutional step for a bill to become a law?
- Ratification by state legislatures
  - Presidential signature after passage in both chambers**
  - Approval by the judicial branch
  - Majority vote in one chamber only
30. Why is the Necessary and Proper Clause vital to congressional authority?
- It limits Congress to only the powers explicitly listed in the Constitution.
  - It grants Congress implied powers to carry out its responsibilities.**
  - It shifts power to the executive branch.
  - It restricts judicial interpretation.

31. Which power allows Congress to conduct investigations into executive agencies?
- Impeachment
  - Oversight**
  - Advice and consent
  - Appropriations
32. How does the First Amendment limit government authority?
- It allows Congress to pass religious laws
  - It prohibits Congress from making laws that restrict speech, religion, press, assembly, or petition.**
  - It limits free speech during peacetime only
  - It grants unlimited authority to law enforcement

*Article II: Presidency*

33. Which of the following is part of the president's job as head of the executive branch?
- Deciding when to declare war
  - Enforce and carry out laws written by Congress**
  - Using the power to lay and collect taxes
  - Using legislative powers to provide for the general welfare of the United States
34. Which of the following is a formal power of the president under Article II?
- Declaring laws unconstitutional
  - Commander in Chief of the armed forces**
  - Setting the legislative agenda of Congress
  - Writing Supreme Court decisions
35. Which of the following is another formal power of the president under Article II? (9-12.GOV.35)
- Impeaching federal judges
  - Negotiating treaties**
  - Repealing legislation
  - Establishing new executive departments
36. How does the 22nd Amendment relate to presidential power?
- It establishes term limits for the president.**
  - It outlines the process for declaring war.
  - It establishes presidential succession and handling of disability.
  - It authorizes impeachment.

*Article III: Judiciary*

37. What is the primary role of the judicial branch?
- To carry out the law
  - To interpret the law**
  - To make the law

38. How many Supreme Court Justices are there?
- 9**
  - 7
  - 13
  - 5
39. What determines the length of service for a Supreme Court Justice?
- A 6-year term
  - Until age 70
  - Life tenure unless impeached**
  - Reappointment every 10 years
40. Which power allows the Supreme Court to check Congress?
- They can declare a law unconstitutional.**
  - They can declare a Presidential action unconstitutional.
  - They choose Senators to fill any empty seats.
  - They can veto any law with a 2/3 vote.
41. What is the primary function of appellate courts in the federal judiciary?
- To conduct trials
  - To review decisions from lower courts for legal errors**
  - To create legislation
  - To enforce criminal sentences

*Elections Process*

42. Which of the following best explains how the Electoral College functions in presidential elections?
- Electors are chosen randomly from each state.
  - Voters directly elect the president in all cases.
  - Voters choose electors who vote for the president, usually based on the popular vote.**
  - Congress chooses electors.
43. What distinguishes a primary election from a general election?
- Primaries are held after the general election.
  - Primaries determine the party's nominee.**
  - General elections are only for local offices.
  - General elections are optional.

*Federalism*

44. Which principle divides power between national and state governments?
- Checks and balances
  - Judicial review
  - Federalism**
  - Separation of powers

45. How does the 10th Amendment affect state authority?
- It centralizes power in the federal government.
  - It prohibits states from making laws.
  - It reserves powers not delegated to the federal government to the states.**
  - It limits local government power.
46. The Idaho Legislature is made up of:
- One chamber
  - Two chambers**
  - Three branches
  - County commissioners
47. The executive branch of Idaho is headed by the:
- Secretary of State
  - Speaker of the House
  - Governor**
  - Attorney General
48. What is the highest court in the Idaho judicial system?
- Court of Appeals
  - Circuit Court
  - Supreme Court of Idaho**
  - District Court
49. Which of the following local bodies typically oversees city-level decision-making?
- Supreme Court
  - Congressional caucus
  - City council**
  - Governor's cabinet
50. Tribal governments have sovereignty in:
- National defense
  - Internal affairs on tribal lands**
  - State elections
  - Federal budgets