

## **MT League of Women Voters Civics Study 2019**

August 20, 2019

The Committee and interested Helena League members met with Colet Bartow, Division Administrator of Content Standards and Instruction for the Office of Public Instruction, and Elsie Arntzen, Superintendent of Public Instruction. Sup. Arntzen offered general comments including an interest in placing greater emphasis on the Pledge of Allegiance.

Colet noted that the current MT Curriculum Standards are 20 years old and are being updated. That process includes a “Negotiated Rule Making Committee” with input from all stakeholders. The Committee will be organized in October 2019. The Board of Education will need to approve the final draft. Sherry Meador offered to be the LWVMT representative to this committee. Cheri Bergeron offered to be the alternate.

Civil Discourse is mentioned but not emphasized in the current State Standards. Because the League, on the National, State, and local levels is emphasizing civil discourse via the Harvard Study Program, the League may want to emphasize Civil Discourse as an essential foundation for policy development/civics.

Information on opportunities for public input on Curriculum Standards will be posted on the Secretary of State website under “Administrative Register” and on the OPI website. The public can subscribe to OPI’s newsletter.

Social Studies is one of five State Curriculum Standards. Social Studies includes civics, economics, history, and geography. Many stakeholders are asking for more math, traditional science, and computer science. Some are asking for more art, music, and practical applications like photography and personal finance management, technical education and health enhancements. Proposals with less economic impact are more likely to be implemented.

Montana has 428 school districts which use the State Standards and also refine their own curriculum on a 5-year cycle. Some smaller Montana school districts are organized into regional administrative groups. Non-public schools that are accredited use the same Standards. It was suggested that OPI provide a “model curriculum” to School District Boards.

Partnerships with the MT Historical society can enhance the quality and impact of school projects. The usefulness of public officials coming to the classroom was recognized.

I-Civics is an online program used by some students.

OPI coordinates with University Departments of Education (currently 8 programs) to advance State Standards.

Following the presentation, League members commented on Registering students in high schools (including private schools) twice a year, at least 30 days before each election. The League might also reach out to Senior Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts.