

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS**

**Bill Number:** SB 470

**51st Legislature, 1st Session, 2013**

**Tracking Number:** .191900.3

**Short Title:** “We the People” Education Program

**Sponsor(s):** Senators Cisco McSorley and Mark Moores

**Analyst:** James Ball

**Date:** February 17, 2013

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**Bill Summary:**

SB 470 makes an appropriation to fund a statewide “We the People” civic education program for elementary, middle, and high school students and teachers.

**Fiscal Impact:**

\$30,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Public Education Department (PED) for expenditure in FY 14. Unexpended or unencumbered funds revert to the General Fund.

**Substantive Issues:**

The Center for Democracy and Civic Education (CDCE) in New Mexico stated that this program has been operational for 26 years, but is no longer funded by the US Department of Education.

Funds would be used to expand the program statewide in schools and to provide professional development for teachers who have not had formal training or education on the Constitution, government and other civics-related subjects.

**Background:**

The “We the People” civics education program is a project of the CDCE, a national organization that maintains a presence in New Mexico and all other states. According to their website the CDCE is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational corporation dedicated to promoting an enlightened and responsible citizenry committed to democratic principles and actively engaged in the practice of democracy in the United States and other countries.

CDCE specializes in:

- civic and citizenship education;
- law-related education; and
- international educational exchange programs for developing democracies.

Programs focus on:

- the US Constitution, including the Bill of Rights;
- American political traditions and institutions at the federal, state, and local levels;
- constitutionalism;
- civic participation; and
- the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

CDCE administers a wide range of curricular, professional development, and community-based programs. The principal goals of the Center’s programs are to help students develop:

- an increased understanding of the institutions of American constitutional democracy and the fundamental principles and values upon which they are founded;
- the skills necessary to participate as effective and responsible citizens; and
- willingness to use democratic procedures for making decisions and managing conflict.

Some New Mexico school districts have participated in the “We the People” program for many years. For example, Moriarty High School has won the New Mexico “We the People” competition several times. Moriarty High School also competed in the first “We the People” National Finals 25 years ago.

**Committee Referrals:**

SEC/SFC

**Related Bills:**

HB 51 *Summer School Elective Civics Classes*

HB 320 *UNM “We the People” Program*