

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2804

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to promoting geography education.

Brief Description: Establishing an endowment for the promotion of geography education.

Sponsors: Representatives Schual-Berke, Hudgins, Fromhold, Ormsby, Hunt, Barlow, Sullivan, Haigh, Lantz, Quall, Miloscia and McIntire.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/29/08, 2/1/08 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to contract with a national organization to establish and operate an endowment for the promotion of geography education in Washington, if funds are provided.
- Requires the organization to have experience operating geography education endowments, have a local affiliated advisory committee, and provide equal non-state matching funds.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Barlow, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haigh, Liias, Roach, Santos and Sullivan.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

The National Geographic Society (Society) was formed in 1888 and is currently one of the largest non-profit scientific and educational institutions in the world. The Society operates a number of different organizations under its umbrella, one of which is the National Geographic

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Education Foundation (Foundation). The Foundation awards more than \$5 million each year to support teacher training, outreach, and other programs that promote geography education and provides support to state-level coalitions (called Geography Alliances) of K-12 teachers, college geographers and educators, and school administrators. There is an active Washington Geographic Alliance.

One initiative of the Society is to match local contributions in a state, up to \$500,000, for the express purpose of establishing an endowment for geography education. The earnings of each state endowment are used only to support geography education in that state. The Foundation manages the fund and covers administrative costs. To ensure local accountability, grants are recommended by a local advisory committee for approval by the Board of Trustees of the Foundation. To date, 23 other states have created geography education endowments through the Society and Foundation.

Summary of Bill:

Subject to funding, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must contract with a national organization to establish, maintain, and operate an endowment for the promotion of geography education in Washington. The national organization must have experience operating geography education endowments and provide equal non-state matching funds.

Funds and interest on the endowment are used for geography education programs, including curriculum, resource collections, and professional development. The national organization must have an affiliated advisory committee in the state to recommend local projects to be funded by the endowment. The organization must report annually to the OSPI on the recipients and purposes of expenditure from the fund.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 22, 2008.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Too many students are geographically illiterate. Knowledge of geography benefits a student's reading, writing, and math skills. Geography fits well with the state's Essential Academic Learning Requirements. Washington has an amazing opportunity to be the 24th state to receive matching funds from the Foundation for geography education. Geography is more than recognizing places on a map; it provides education about the interaction of culture, history, and natural resources. Endowment funds could enrich geography education by providing globes, giant maps, school assemblies, cultural

performances, and other activities. Few teachers have exposure to geography as a discipline. In today's global economy, there is a need for everyone to have greater understanding about the world. The Foundation stands ready to match up to \$500,000. They have the experience in managing these endowments for other states. Their fundamental interest is in improving the geographic literacy of American students, and one way to do that is to improve the quality of teaching of geography.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Schual-Berke, prime sponsor; Meghan Hoyer, Washington Geographic Alliance; JW Harrington, University of Washington; Jim Huckabay, Central Washington University; and Lanny Proffer, National Geographic Society.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.