

HOUSE BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1572

As Passed House:
February 11, 2000

Title: An act relating to providing educational and instructional materials about the experiences of persons of Japanese descent during World War II to K-12 and postsecondary students and other citizens of the state of Washington.

Brief Description: Creating the Washington civil liberties public education program.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Wensman, Tokuda, Santos, Quall, Veloria, Schoesler, Conway, Murray, Constantine, Ogden, Rockefeller, Kenney, O'Brien, D. Schmidt and Haigh).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/13/00 [DPS].

Education: 1/27/00 [DP2S].

Floor Activity:

Referred to Education: 1/19/00.

Passed House: 2/11/00, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- The Washington Civil Liberties Public Education program is created to help students and the public understand the history and causes of the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.
- The program will develop and distribute educational materials, videos, plays, speakers, bureaus, and exhibitions for schools, colleges, and other interested parties.
- The program, which will be administered by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, will develop the materials through a grant process.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Haigh, Democratic Vice Chair; Schindler, Republican Vice Chair; Carlson; Cox; Keiser; Rockefeller; Santos; D. Schmidt; Stensen; Thomas and Wensman.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, an order that authorized any military commander to exclude any person from any area. The order did not mention any specific group, nor did it provide for detention. However, there was an understanding among officials that the authorization was intended to be used to remove and detain Japanese Americans. In addition, Congress passed P.L. 77-503, which authorized a civil prison term and fine for civilians convicted of violating a military order.

General John DeWitt, military commander of the Western Defense Command, issued a series of 100 military orders that applied exclusively to civilians of Japanese ancestry living in the West Coast states. After encouraging affected civilians to voluntarily move inland, he ordered all persons of Japanese ancestry in California, Oregon, Washington, and parts of Arizona to turn themselves into temporary detention camps near their homes.

General Dewitt's detention orders were justified as necessary for the protection of the West Coast against sabotage and espionage. The order included babies, orphans, adopted children and the infirm and bedridden elderly as well as healthy adults. Anyone with more than 1/32 Japanese ancestry was included in the order, with the only exception made for those in prisons and asylums.

Japanese Americans relocated and detained under these orders were usually confined in one of ten camps located in Utah, Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming, California, Idaho, and Arkansas. Those camps contained 112,581 detainees. In addition, 26 smaller internment camps were located in 18 states. The last camp was closed in October 1946.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill:

The Legislature finds that:

- There must be strong educational resources aimed at teaching students and the public about the fragile nature of our constitutional rights;

- The federal Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians issued several reports describing the lessons learned from the decision to detain, relocate and imprison citizens and resident aliens of Japanese descent during World War II;
- The commission concluded that the decision was founded on racial prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership, not on military considerations; and
- The decision resulted in a grave injustice to American citizens and permanent residents of Japanese ancestry and caused them great suffering, enormous damages and incalculable losses.

The Washington Civil Liberties Public Education program is created. To the extent that funding from public or private sources is provided for this purpose, grants will be provided through the program to educate the public on the history and lessons of the internment of persons of Japanese ancestry during World War II. The grants may be used to develop and distribute educational materials, videos, plays, speakers, bureaus, and exhibitions for schools, colleges, and other interested parties.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) will administer the program and select grant recipients. The selection criteria are described. The required components of each proposal include projects that link the detention experience with the civil rights guaranteed by the constitution so that the detention may be illuminated and understood. The required components also include projects that contribute to and expand upon existing educational and research materials on the detention experience. In addition to the six required criteria, the legislation includes a list of recommended components for each funded project, and gives the SPI permission to adopt additional criteria.

During the review process, the SPI will assign a priority to applicants based on the inclusion of different components within their applications. The SPI may accept private donations for the program. The office will report on the program to the Governor and legislative committees by January 1, 2002.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 20, 2000.

Effective Date of Second Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: During World War II, Washington's citizens of Japanese ancestry were forcibly detained and incarcerated because of their race and ancestry.

Washingtonians were separated from their families, imprisoned in temporary internment camps, and dispossessed of their homes and businesses. Most of these citizens felt shamed by their incarceration so never fully shared their experiences, even with their children and grandchildren. One remedy to safeguard our country from such actions in the future is to educate all children so this type of injustice never happens again, yet many children never learn about the internment camps. The existing curriculum and resource materials about this period in our history are dated and incomplete. In addition, many Washingtonians who experienced the camps are elderly. Their stories need to be recorded for the education of new generations. This legislation will help preserve those memories and create instructional resources that teachers will want to use. Using current technologies to preserve and share the memories will help that period in history jump off the pages and come alive for students.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (Original bill) Representative Mike Wensman, prime sponsor; Representative Kip Tokuda, co-sponsor; Senator Adam Klein; Robert Nakamura, James Arina, Dorothy Brooks, Japanese American Citizen League; Henry Miyataki, Sam Owada, citizens; Larry Streckland, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Rainer Houser, educator; Randi Abrams, Jewish Federation; Sheri Appleton; and David Della, Commission on Asian Pacific Americans Association.