

# HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

## HB 1572

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**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:** Representatives Wensman, Tokuda, Santos, Quall, Veloria, Schoesler, Conway, Murray, Constantine, Ogden, Rockefeller, Kenney, O'Brien, D. Schmidt and Haigh.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Meeting Date:** January 13, 2000

**Bill Analysis Prepared by:** Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

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**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 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. Through the program, grants will be provided 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 include projects that link the detention experience with the experiences of other populations so that violations of civil rights and acts of injustice 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 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. Applicants may include nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, public schools, cultural institutions, units of governments, community and arts organizations, and individuals. In addition, consortia of those entities may apply. An account is created for state monies appropriated for the grant program. The SPI will report on the program to the governor and legislative committees by January 1, 2002.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

***Effective Date:*** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.