

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5173

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Respecting holidays of faith and conscience.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Commerce & Labor (originally sponsored by Senators Hasegawa, Kline, Frockt and Chase).

Senate Committee on Commerce & Labor
House Committee on Judiciary
House Committee on Appropriations

Background: The following are current legal state holidays: Sunday, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving and the day following, and Christmas. State employees are entitled to one paid holiday per calendar year in addition to these legal holidays. State employees can select the day to take this additional paid holiday after consultation with their employer.

Children must attend public school between the ages of 8 and up to 18 with some exceptions. Some of these exceptions include the following: the child is attending a private school, the child is being home-schooled, the child is attending an education center, the child is 16 years of age and is employed, or the child has met graduation requirements. Parents can request that a child be temporarily excused from school for purposes agreed upon by the school authorities and the parent, provided that the absences do not cause serious adverse effect upon the student's educational progress. Students excused for these temporary, agreed-upon absences can be claimed as full-time equivalent students to the extent they would otherwise have been claimed, for the purposes of annual basic education allocation compliance, basic education minimum instructional requirements, and enrollment calculations.

Summary: Employees of the state and its political subdivisions, including employees of school districts and nonclassified employees of higher education institutions who hold appointments or are employed under contracts for less than 12 consecutive months, are entitled to two unpaid holidays per calendar year for reasons of faith or conscience or for an organized activity conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or religious organization. Employees of public institutions of higher education, including community colleges, technical colleges, and workforce training programs are included in the group of employees who can take the two unpaid days. An employer must allow an employee to take an unpaid holiday unless the employee's absence would impose an undue

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hardship on the employer or the employee is necessary to maintain public safety. The Office of Financial Management must establish a definition for undue hardship.

Subject to approval by the students' parents, students are excused from school for reasons of faith or conscience or for an organized activity conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or religious organization for up to two days per academic year without penalty. Students excused for these absences may still be claimed as full-time equivalent students. The student absences will not affect school district compliance with basic education minimum instructional requirements, annual basic education allocation requirements, or enrollment calculations. The student absences may not mandate school closures.

Institutions of higher education and state-funded workforce training programs must develop policies to accommodate student absences for reasons of faith or conscience to prevent adverse effects on students' grades.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	47	0	
House	64	32	(House amended)
Senate	49	0	(Senate concurred)

Effective: June 12, 2014