

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5641

As Passed Senate, March 15, 1995

Title: An act relating to public school students learning a second language.

Brief Description: Studying providing instruction in world languages in the common school system.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Fairley, Prince, Kohl, Fraser, Rasmussen and Prentice.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 2/17/95, 2/24/95 [DP].
Passed Senate, 3/15/95, 43-5.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Finkbeiner, Gaspard, Hochstatter, Johnson and Rasmussen.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: In 1993, the Legislature established the Washington Task Force on International Education and Cultural Exchanges. The Task Force made recommendations on ways to improve and expand international education and cultural exchanges. The final recommendations were submitted in November 1994.

The Task Force recommended that students in the public schools learn a world language other than English, beginning in the elementary grades.

Summary of Bill: The Superintendent of Public Instruction, with the Commission on Student Learning, must conduct a study on instruction in world languages in the public schools, by January 1, 1996. The study must identify possible funding incentives to encourage schools to offer instruction in world languages, develop plans for schools to implement world language programs, and target languages used in the countries that are key trade partners of Washington State.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 6, 1995.

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

Testimony For: The Task Force requested a study be done because it did not have the necessary information to make a recommendation in this area. The Task Force believes that competency in world languages is critical for Washington State students to compete for jobs,

study and business opportunities abroad. The geographic location of our state makes world trade important to its future economy. Too few American students study a language other than English, and when they do, the languages they study are not the languages of Washington State's trade partners. To be serious about participating in world trade and world peace, it is essential that our students become competent in another language. People need to be able to understand and communicate with the people they work with. Learning another language can also help students learn English better. There is a concern about the fiscal impact on small schools if schools are required to offer extensive world language programs.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Fraser, prime sponsor; Larry Strickland, OSPI; Ralph Munro, Secretary of State; Burton Bard, ACE; Frank Brouillet; Paul Shin; Dick Langum, Cashmere School Dist. #222; Sharon Case, WA Assoc. for Foreign Language Teaching; Bill Sellars.