

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6205

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, January 31, 2024

Title: An act relating to mandating instruction on the meaning and history of the pledge of allegiance in public schools.

Brief Description: Mandating instruction on the meaning and history of the pledge of allegiance in public schools.

Sponsors: Senators McCune, Wilson, J. and Fortunato.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/25/24, 1/31/24 [DPS, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Requires school districts to offer instruction in the meaning and history of the Pledge of Allegiance beginning no later than the 2025-26 school year.
- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to make related curricular resources available in the library of openly licensed courseware, to the extent practicable.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6205 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Dozier, McCune, Mullet and Pedersen.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Nobles, Vice Chair; Hunt.

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

Staff: Alex Fairfortune (786-7416)

Background: School Curriculum in Washington State. Common schools in Washington are subject to curriculum requirements set by state law. These requirements include that all common schools provide instruction in, among other things, reading, arithmetic, and the history of the United States. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) may prescribe other required curriculum areas by rule. State law also prescribes various areas in which school districts must offer instruction or are encouraged to do so. Examples of these areas include instruction in cardiopulmonary resuscitation, sex trafficking awareness and prevention, and the Holocaust.

Pledge of Allegiance in Schools. The board of directors of every school district must cause appropriate flag exercises to be held in each classroom at the beginning of the school day and at the opening of all school assemblies. Those students who wish to do so may recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Those students who choose not to recite the Pledge must maintain a respectful silence.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): Beginning no later than the 2025-26 school year, school districts must offer instruction in the meaning and history of the Pledge of Allegiance.

To the extent practicable, OSPI must make curricular resources related to the meaning and history of the Pledge of Allegiance available in the library of openly licensed courseware.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (First Substitute):

- Removes specific requirements about when instruction on the meaning and history of the Pledge of Allegiance must be offered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: At Eatonville Middle School a class of students were asked to write the Pledge of Allegiance and write about its meaning. Many of the students couldn't spell some of the words, or they weren't familiar with the meaning. The class did a large project where they studied the meaning, history, and law around the Pledge. They then taught this information to their peers. The students decided that the law

needed to be changed so that all students know the meaning behind the Pledge they recite every day. The Pledge is a statement of value and a reminder of the principles that unite us.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Jim McCune, Prime Sponsor; Julie Barrett, Conservative Ladies of Washington; Alex Hansen, Eatonville Middle School; Blake Pool; Troy Smith; Elijah Whatley; Layla Clark.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.