

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1664

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Education*

Title: An act relating to education.

Brief Description: Clarifying educational requirements regarding sign language.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Belcher, Brumsickle, Ferguson, Fraser, Scott, G. Fisher, Cole, R. Johnson, Mielke, Bowman, Winsley and Anderson.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Education, February 25, 1991, DP.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 17 members: Representatives Peery, Chair; G. Fisher, Vice Chair; Vance, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Betrozoff; Broback; Brumsickle; Cole; Dorn; Holland; P. Johnson; Jones; Neher; Orr; Rasmussen; Roland; H. Sommers; and Valle.

Minority Report: *Without recommendation.* Signed by 1 member: Representative Brough, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Susan Kirkpatrick (786-7291).

Background: In 1988, the Legislature passed several laws concerning sign language. In RCW 28A.230.090 regarding high school graduation requirements, sign language classes are allowed to satisfy foreign language requirements. In RCW 28B.80.350 regarding minimum admission standards for 4-year institutions, coursework in sign language satisfies any foreign language requirement established as a general undergraduate admissions requirement. In RCW 28A.410.010 regarding certification of school employees, the State Board of Education is required to take certain steps regarding certification of sign language instructors.

The RCWs do not designate a particular form of sign language.

The term "sign language" is a generic term and includes all forms of sign language, used by both the hearing impaired and others. For example, American Indian sign language is one form of sign language. With respect to the hearing-impaired, there are a number of different kinds of sign language used.

Summary of Bill: The RCWs referring to sign language are amended to refer to American sign language.

Fiscal Note: Requested February 14, 1991.

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

Testimony For: There are over 20 different kinds of sign language for the hearing-impaired. American sign language is the most common and meets all of the qualifications of a foreign language, with its own syntax and grammar. It is part of the deaf culture and should be recognized. There are 20 other states which have sign language laws like Washington's law and they refer to American sign language.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Representative Belcher, prime sponsor (in favor); Mike Izak, Washington Association of the Deaf (in favor); Mat Burns, Thurston County Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, (in favor); Leon Curtis, Department of Social and Health Services (in favor); Larry Peterson, sign language consultant (in favor); and Byron Bridges, Department of Social and Health Services (in favor).