

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2541

AS OF FEBRUARY 24, 1992

Brief Description: Regarding the study of American Indian languages and cultures.

SPONSORS: Representatives Dellwo, Jacobsen, Zellinsky, Wineberry, R. Fisher, Wood, Fuhrman, Schmidt, Wilson, Winsley, Paris, J. Kohl, O'Brien and Anderson

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Hearing Dates: February 27, 1992

BACKGROUND:

By law, each student who graduates with a teaching credential from a Washington institution of higher education must take at least one course in either Washington State or Pacific Northwest history and government.

By law, the Higher Education Coordinating Board establishes minimum admission standards for the state-supported four-year universities and colleges. At its discretion, each institution may adopt more rigorous standards than those established by the board. The authority to establish these standards has one limitation. Coursework in sign language must satisfy any foreign language admissions requirement that either the board or the institutions adopt.

The board has adopted an admissions requirement that each entering student have two years of a single foreign language before entering a four-year university or college. The student must study the language in school, during the eighth grade or later. Two years of study in American Sign Language will satisfy this requirement. No other foreign language is specified in the board's admissions guidelines. The foreign language requirement is waived for students from non-English speaking countries who enter the United States educational system in the eighth grade or later.

Some members of the Indian Educators' Association have expressed concerns about the lack of training new teachers receive in the culture and history of Washington's native Americans. In addition, these educators report that native American languages are not taught for credit in the state's public schools.

SUMMARY:

Any course in Washington State or Pacific Northwest history and government taught to fulfill statutory requirements for future teachers will include information on the culture, history, and government of the American Indians of the state and region.

Coursework in an American Indian language will satisfy any admissions requirement adopted by either the Higher Education Coordinating Board or the institutions for instruction in a language other than English.

The phrase "language other than English" replaces "foreign language" in the statute on minimum admissions standards.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested