

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2406

As Reported by House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to teaching Washington's tribal history and culture.

Brief Description: Requiring tribal history and culture curriculum.

Sponsors: Representatives McCoy, Rockefeller, Conway, McDermott, Sullivan, Ormsby, Fromhold, Hunt, Lovick, Cooper, Haigh, Anderson, Kenney, Santos, Darneille, Chase, Moeller and Lantz.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/26/04, 2/5/04 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop a model curriculum for Washington tribal history.
- Requires school districts to collaborate with Indian tribal governments.
- Encourages school districts to supplement the model curriculum with cultural exchange opportunities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; McDermott, Vice Chair; Haigh, Hunter, Rockefeller and Santos.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Tom, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Cox and McMahan.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

Washington has a rich Native American heritage that dates back thousands of years. There currently are 29 federally-recognized Indian tribes whose reservations are located in Washington. Many Northwest Indians still observe the traditions of their ancient ancestors.

Washington's high school graduation requirements include a minimum of one-half credit of course work in Washington history and government. Courses designed to meet this requirement are encouraged to include information on the culture, history, and government of the American Indians who were the first inhabitants of Washington.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must develop a model curriculum for incorporating Washington's tribal history in existing school district-level history and social studies courses. The SPI must collaborate with social studies teachers and tribal education and cultural specialists and must make the curriculum available to school districts.

School districts are required to collaborate with the tribal government of the federally-recognized Indian tribe whose reservation lands or traditional lands and territories are nearest the school district, and are encouraged to supplement the model curriculum developed by SPI with cultural exchange opportunities. The SPI offices of Indian Education and Social Studies are directed to assist districts in determining the locations of reservation lands and traditional lands and territories.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill required each school district to incorporate the history and culture of one or more federally-recognized Indian tribes into its history and social studies curriculum for each grade level. A school district with all or a portion of a tribal reservation within its boundaries was required to teach the history and culture of that tribe. A school district with no portion of a tribal reservation within its boundaries was required to teach the history and culture of the federally-recognized Indian tribes whose traditional lands and territories were within a one hundred-mile radius of the district. The substitute bill directs the SPI to develop a model curriculum for teaching Washington tribal history.

In the original bill, the history and culture taught had to be tribally-developed, and school districts were required to collaborate with the tribes to develop and implement the required curriculum. In the substitute bill, school districts must collaborate with local tribes, and are encouraged to supplement the curriculum with cultural exchange opportunities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Students who feel left out of the school culture, or not respected in the school system, want to drop out and sometimes do. It doesn't just affect Native American students when they don't see themselves represented in the school. It also affects non-Indian students who later wonder why they were not taught the history of Washington's tribes.

This proposal builds a bridge between the schools and tribes. It can be a catalyst for social change and will encourage students to work toward increased cultural awareness. The SPI Office of Indian Education already has developed some information for teaching tribal history and culture. The curriculum is aligned with the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and includes parent and community involvement components. If the state really wants to leave no Indian child behind, the state should allow schools and tribes to work together.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In Support) Representative McCoy, prime sponsor; Martina Whelshula, First Peoples Language; Dawn Vyvyan, Yakima Nation; Marsha Wynecoop, First Peoples Language and Culture Committee; Denny Hurtado, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Larry Davis, State Board of Education.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Alton McDonald, National Action Network.