
ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2551

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2020 Regular Session

By House State Government & Tribal Relations (originally sponsored by Representatives Lekanoff, Ramel, Rude, Leavitt, Valdez, Davis, Doglio, Walen, Pollet, Macri, Ormsby, and Santos)

READ FIRST TIME 02/07/20.

1 AN ACT Relating to permitting students to wear traditional tribal
2 regalia and objects of cultural significance at graduation ceremonies
3 and related events; adding a new section to chapter 28A.600 RCW;
4 adding a new section to chapter 28B.10 RCW; creating new sections;
5 and declaring an emergency.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes that
8 relationships between sovereign governments are strengthened when
9 decisions of mutual interest are based in a shared respect of
10 cultural values. The legislature recognizes also that school
11 districts, public schools, and institutions of higher education may
12 use dress codes and other requirements to restrict the wearing of
13 tribal regalia and objects of cultural significance at graduation
14 ceremonies.

15 Although the restrictions may be premised on promoting
16 uniformity, they are not appropriate in the context of government-to-
17 government relationships and do not recognize the distinct and unique
18 cultural heritage of Native Americans.

19 The legislature, therefore, intends to affirm inherent rights
20 assured through tribal sovereignty and expressly acknowledge that
21 students in public schools and institutions of higher education may

1 wear traditional tribal regalia or objects of cultural significance
2 at graduation ceremonies and related events.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.600
4 RCW to read as follows:

5 (1) School districts and public schools may not prohibit students
6 who are members of a federally recognized tribe from wearing
7 traditional tribal regalia or objects of Native American cultural
8 significance along with or attached to a gown at graduation
9 ceremonies or related school events. School districts and public
10 schools may not require such students to wear a cap if it is
11 incompatible with the regalia or significant object.

12 (2) School districts and, when necessary, public schools shall
13 update any relevant policies or procedures in accordance with this
14 section.

15 (3) For the purposes of this section, "public schools" has the
16 same meaning as in RCW 28A.150.010.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** Sections 2 and 4 of this act apply to the
18 graduating class of 2020 and subsequent graduating classes.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.10
20 RCW to read as follows:

21 (1) Institutions of higher education may not prohibit students
22 who are members of a federally recognized tribe from wearing
23 traditional tribal regalia or objects of Native American cultural
24 significance along with or attached to a gown at graduation
25 ceremonies or related events. Institutions of higher education may
26 not require such students to wear a cap if it is incompatible with
27 the regalia or significant object.

28 (2) Institutions of higher education shall update any relevant
29 policies or procedures in accordance with this section.

30 (3) For the purposes of this section, "institutions of higher
31 education" has the same meaning as in RCW 28B.10.016.

32 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** This act may be known and cited as the
33 right to tribal regalia act.

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** This act is necessary for the immediate
35 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of

1 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes
2 effect immediately.

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