

RCW 28A.600.500 Graduation ceremonies—Tribal regalia. (1)

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

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

(3) For the purposes of this section, "public schools" has the same meaning as in RCW 28A.150.010. [2020 c 35 § 2.]

Intent—2020 c 35: "The legislature recognizes that relationships between sovereign governments are strengthened when decisions of mutual interest are based in a shared respect of cultural values. The legislature recognizes also that school districts, public schools, and institutions of higher education may use dress codes and other requirements to restrict the wearing of tribal regalia and objects of cultural significance at graduation ceremonies.

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

The legislature, therefore, intends to affirm inherent rights assured through tribal sovereignty and expressly acknowledge that students in public schools and institutions of higher education may wear traditional tribal regalia or objects of cultural significance at graduation ceremonies and related events." [2020 c 35 § 1.]

Applicability—2020 c 35: "Sections 2 and 4 of this act apply to the graduating class of 2020 and subsequent graduating classes." [2020 c 35 § 3.]

Short title—2020 c 35: "This act may be known and cited as the right to tribal regalia act." [2020 c 35 § 5.]

Effective date—2020 c 35: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [March 18, 2020]." [2020 c 35 § 6.]