
SENATE BILL 5772

State of Washington

58th Legislature

2003 Regular Session

By Senators Benton, Morton, Stevens, Roach, Mulliken, Horn, Oke and Kline

Read first time 02/11/2003. Referred to Committee on Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to the compulsory study of the United States
2 Constitution and the Declaration of Independence and other foundational
3 historical documents of importance to United States citizens; amending
4 RCW 28A.230.170; adding a new section to chapter 28A.230 RCW; adding a
5 new section to chapter 28A.320 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that young people
8 need to:

9 (a) Fully appreciate the nature of liberty and the ideas that laid
10 the foundation for the rights, privileges, and quality of life we enjoy
11 today as United States citizens;

12 (b) Clearly understand the duties inherent in responsible
13 citizenship including the obligation to become meaningfully informed
14 and to participate actively in the electoral process; and

15 (c) Read, discuss, and understand the Declaration of Independence,
16 the Constitution of the United States, and the Constitution of the
17 state of Washington as representative of the basic values upon which
18 this nation and state were founded.

19 (2) The legislature further finds that:

1 (a) The Bill of Rights secures our freedom to speak, print, read,
2 assemble, pray, petition the government, and keep and bear arms;
3 protects us from unreasonable arrests, searches, excessive bail, double
4 jeopardy, coerced confessions, and cruel and unusual punishment; and
5 secures our rights to due process, jury trials, and counsel, and to
6 present defense witnesses;

7 (b) The Bill of Rights is integral to the American way of life.
8 America's civic holidays, President's Day, Independence Day, Labor Day,
9 Veterans' Day, and Memorial Day all remind us of the special
10 contributions and sacrifices made by our forefathers and leaders to
11 preserve, protect, and extend our freedoms; and

12 (c) The rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights
13 deserve perennial celebrations, and the sacrifices made to protect the
14 Bill of Rights deserve eternal remembrance.

15 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28A.230.170 and 1985 c 341 s 1 are each amended to
16 read as follows:

17 (1) The thorough study and demonstrated knowledge and understanding
18 of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United
19 States ((and)) including the Bill of Rights, the Constitution of the
20 state of Washington, and other foundational historical documents of
21 importance to United States citizens that embody the fundamental
22 principles of our freedoms and liberties shall be a condition
23 prerequisite to graduation from the public and private high schools of
24 this state. The state board of education acting upon the advice of the
25 superintendent of public instruction shall provide by rule ((or
26 regulation)) for the implementation of this section.

27 (2) Every school district shall ensure that each year on or around
28 December 15th students in kindergarten through grade twelve shall
29 receive at least one school day of instruction in the Declaration of
30 Independence and the United States Constitution including the Bill of
31 Rights. On the Bill of Rights Day, December 15th, or the first school
32 day following Bill of Rights Day, the Bill of Rights shall be read
33 aloud, in its entirety, in all public schools in the state of
34 Washington.

35 (3) Students shall be encouraged to memorize the preamble of the
36 United States Constitution.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.230
2 RCW to read as follows:

3 The word "study" in RCW 28A.230.170 includes:

4 (1) Illustrating, by teacher instruction, how the Declaration of
5 Independence provided the outline for both the United States
6 Constitution and the Washington state Constitution;

7 (2) Relating sections of the Washington state Constitution to
8 statements made in the Declaration of Independence and the United
9 States Constitution;

10 (3) Teaching the heritage and meaning of this statement from the
11 Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident,
12 that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator
13 with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty,
14 and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, governments
15 are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent
16 of the governed."

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.320
18 RCW to read as follows:

19 (1) December 15th is established as the "Bill of Rights Day" to
20 provide an opportunity for students and school employees to reflect
21 upon the meaning, importance, and uniqueness of this document.

22 (2) Local school boards are responsible for providing books that
23 explain the meaning and substance of the Declaration of Independence,
24 and the constitutions of the United States and the state of Washington.

25 (3) Every school district shall display the Declaration of
26 Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Washington state
27 Constitution.

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