

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2669

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to the teaching of nonacademic subjects.

Brief Description: Requiring parental consent for certain nonacademic subjects.

Sponsors: Representatives Mulliken, Johnson, Talcott, Boldt, Koster, Smith, McDonald, McCune, Sherstad, Sheahan and Bush.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/29/98, 2/5/98 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Smith; Sterk; Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Quall and Veloria.

Staff: Jim Morishima (786-7191).

Background: Local school district boards of directors have the discretion whether to adopt a program about sex education or human sexuality. School districts must involve parents and school district community groups in developing the program. Any parent who does not want his or her child to attend a course in human sexuality may file a written request with the board.

Summary of Bill: If a school offers a class concerning sex education, sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, sexual orientation, suicide, or euthanasia it must offer the class as an independent unit. Although, a school may not discourage incidental student-led discussions in these topic areas, teachers may not elicit student discussion outside of the independent unit. The school must offer the independent unit as an elective subject to written parental consent.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill gives parents more control over the education of their child by allowing them to opt their child in to certain non-academic subjects. Also, communication and trust between parents and a school are fostered by this bill.

Testimony Against: This bill may prevent emergency discussions about topics like the suicide of a classmate. The bill may prevent students from attending classes that are mandated by the Basic Education Act. The bill removes the discussion of AIDS from its proper context as part of a health class. The opt in- language in the bill will increase the bureaucracy in the schools. Finally, permission slips can be withheld for reasons other than actual denial of permission; e.g., lost permission slips, illiterate parents.

Testified: Representative Mulliken, prime sponsor; Judith Billings, citizen (con); Roxanne Sitler, parent (pro); Muriel Tingley, Washington Parent Coalition for Academic Excellence (pro); Barbara Casey, Washington State PTA (con); Karl Swenson, NW Aids Foundation (con); Shavanna Schilling, Washington State Grange (pro); Virginia DeForest, American Association of University Women (con); Melinda Lincicome, Washington Family Council (pro); Marda Kirkwood, CURE (pro); Jim Gailbraith, Facts for Freedom (pro); Jean Ameluxen, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (con); and Katharine Brown Pearson, League of Women Voters (con).