

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2418

As Passed House:
February 15, 2000

Title: An act relating to a World War II oral history project.

Brief Description: Establishing a World War II oral history project.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Woods, Conway, Talcott, D. Schmidt, Koster, Bush, Wensman, Carlson, Rockefeller, Kenney, Cody, Barlean, Schoesler, Sump, Cairnes, Thomas, Huff, Haigh, Mastin, McDonald, Lantz, Santos, Skinner, Ogden and McIntire).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/17/00, 1/27/00 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/15/00, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- The World War II Oral History Project is established to preserve, for the education of our state's children, the history and memories of the veterans and other citizens who contributed to the state and country during World War II.
- The contributions may include service in the armed forces of the country or other forms of service to the nation, state, or community.
- The project will be administered by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, with the assistance of an advisory committee that includes, among others, members of the World War II Memorial Educational Foundation.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Haigh, Democratic Vice Chair; Schindler, Republican Vice Chair; Carlson; Cox; Keiser; Rockefeller; Santos; D. Schmidt; Stensen; Thomas and Wensman.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

About 250,000 Washingtonians served their country in the armed forces of the United States during World War II. Almost 6,000 of these residents lost their lives during the war. On Friday, May 28, 1999, Washington became one of the first states in the country to officially dedicate a memorial to World War II veterans. The memorial was designed by artist/sculptor Simon Kogan of Olympia, and features the names of Washington residents who lost their lives during the war. Veterans and other supporters raised almost \$800,000 to fund the memorial.

Veterans and other members of the World War II Memorial Committee convened an educational subcommittee to help develop an instructional guide on the memorial for use in Washington's schools. In 1998, members of the subcommittee decided to create an educational foundation to help provide an objective and accurate overview of the war for students, and help students understand and learn the lessons of the war. The foundation also recommended the creation of an outline or guide for oral history that will interact with K-12 World War II curriculum.

Summary of Bill:

The World War II Oral History Project is established in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The program is intended to preserve, for the education of our state's children, the history and memories of the citizens who contributed to the state and country during World War II. The contributions may include service in the armed forces of the country or other forms of service to the nation or community. The history and memories will be preserved through audiotapes, videotapes, films, stories, digitally, and through other appropriate means. The materials prepared through the project are intended to help OSPI and teachers in the development of a curriculum for use in kindergarten through 12th grade.

The office shall convene an advisory committee to assist in the design and implementation of the project. The committee will include members of the World War II Memorial Educational Foundation, legislators, representatives of the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Office of the Secretary of State, and others if the need arises. The office may contract with schools, the foundation, and filming

and taping specialists. The office will also prepare requirements for instructional guides to help teachers use the material, and will report on the project by December 1, 2000, and every second year thereafter that the project is funded. Required elements of the first report are described.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This legislation is important to the veterans' community. The state's veterans and others who defended our country during World War II have valuable first hand history lessons that can be used to teach our children the lessons of duty and honor that are part of the legacy left by members of a generation now known as the greatest generation. It is important to preserve their memories first hand, while they can still tell their stories; and, to put names and faces to places around the world where they preserved the world's freedom. However, the mean age of these veterans is 76, and nationally, they are dying at a rate of 3000 per month. Students are eager to understand the things that made our nation great. The project in this legislation will help bring history alive for the state's schoolchildren while preserving the legacy of a community of veterans who never stopped serving their country. It will help students learn the lessons of history from the recorded memories of their own grandparents and great grandparents, and help future generations build on the lessons learned in that war. The project will build on and continue the work of the World War II Memorial Educational Foundation. The foundation has planned to record 200 memories, creating a resource much like that of the Ken Burns series on the Civil War. The tapes will include the memories of veterans of all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

(In support with concerns) The World War II Memorial Educational Foundation should be placed in charge of the project in order to ensure the project builds on work already underway. The reporting date should be moved up by one year. The bill should emphasize the importance of incorporating all memories, including those of Latino and Latina Americans, Filipinos, Japanese-Americans, African-Americans, Navajo code talkers, the Tuskegee Airmen, and others who represent the contributions of the diverse peoples of our country. The membership of the advisory committee should be revised to include representation of these veterans. Some of those who contributed to the war effort, such a Filipino veterans who fought alongside American soldiers to defend and retake countries along and islands in the Pacific Ocean, have fought long and hard to have their contributions recognized. This project could be one place to begin redressing that lack of official recognition.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Representative Beverly Woods, prime sponsor; Wally Hoffman, World War II Memorial Foundation; Rafael Ojeda, Hispanic-Pacific of Pierce County (HISPAC); David C. Garcia, American G.I. Forum; Onofre Contreras, Commission on Hispanic Affairs; Ernest Aguilar, American G.I. Forum; and Roberto Briones, citizen.

(In support with concerns) Bill Merifield, World War II Oral History Foundation; and Antonio Cube, Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs.