

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2814

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to civics education.

Brief Description: Emphasizing civics education.

Sponsors: Representatives Uptegrove, Delvin, Quall, Linville, Wood, Ruderman, Schual-Berke, Chase, Santos and Kagi.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/29/04, 2/5/04 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates the Daniel J. Evans Civic Education Award for four students annually who have demonstrated civic leadership in their communities and who have completed a classroom-based assessment in civics developed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- Provides professional development grants to teachers who have used one or more of the classroom-based civics assessments developed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- Provides summer professional development opportunities for teachers in the implementation of the civics essential academic learning requirements and the classroom-based assessments in civics.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; McDermott, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Tom, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Cox, Haigh, Hunter, McMahan, Rockefeller and Santos.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

By law, students must study the constitutions of the United States and the State of Washington in order to graduate from the public and private schools of the state. The State Board of Education (SBE), acting upon recommendations of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), is required to adopt rules to implement the requirement.

The SBE has adopted a rule that, until 2007, students must have at least one credit in American history and government and one-half credit in Washington State history and government in order to graduate from one of the state's public or approved private schools. The American history and government course must include study of the United States Constitution. The course on the history and government of Washington must include study of the state constitution.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, students who graduate must have a total of at least 2.5 high school level credits in some combination of history, geography and civics in order to receive a diploma. The course work offered in these subjects must be aligned with the state's social studies Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs).

The EALRs for social studies includes a democracy benchmark for students in grades five, eight, and ten. The benchmark states: "The student understands and can explain the core values and principles of the United States democracy as set forth in foundational documents, including the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution." The specific knowledge required on the Constitution varies for each of the three grade levels.

At the beginning of each school day and at the opening of all school assemblies, schools must have flag exercises and students must be given the opportunity to salute the flag using the Pledge of Allegiance. Students who choose not to say the pledge are required to maintain a respectful silence.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Daniel J. Evans Civic Education Award is created to recognize students who have demonstrated that they understand the state's Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) in civics. Students must demonstrate this understanding through leadership in the civic life of their communities and completion of at least one of the classroom-based civics assessments developed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI). The SPI will select four students for the award each year and will notify the Governor and Legislature with the recipient's names. Of the four recipients, two will be selected from Eastern Washington and two from Western Washington.

Subject to available funds during the next fiscal year, the SPI will provide professional development grants to teachers who have used one or more of the classroom-based civics assessments developed by the agency. The grants may be used to attend civics conferences and trainings that cover the skills and knowledge included in the state's EALRs in civics.

Subject to available funds, SPI will provide teachers with summer professional development opportunities in civics during the next fiscal year. The opportunities must be focused on the implementation of the civics EALRs and classroom-based assessments.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Removes the appropriations and makes the summer training and professional development grants subject to available funding.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The democratic roots of our state and nation need to be better understood by students and young adults. In order to maintain a democratic form of government, a nation's citizens need to know and understand their rights and responsibilities, yet many leaders are concerned that students are not getting a good education about those rights and responsibilities. The evidence: Many students don't know or understand the state or nation's foundational documents. Many young adults don't vote. Organizations such as the Center for Civic Education have measured the differences in civic behavior between young people who have participated in effective civics education programs and those who have not. Some programs have doubled voter participation when comparing the average voting rates of young adults to the rates of program participants. The SPI has developed EALRs for civics and the agency is now pilot testing classroom-based assessments in the subject. Although the agency is moving in the right direction, teachers need to understand the requirements and need encouragement to use the assessments in their classrooms. This bill attempts to address both goals in modest and inexpensive ways. It also attempts to honor Dan Evans, an effective Governor and a role model for many of the people now in public office.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Upthegrove, prime sponsor; Bill Vogler, Washington State Association of Counties; and Greg Williamson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

(In support with concerns) Monte Benham, Friends of the Constitution.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.