

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 2406

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 27, 2004

Title: An act relating to teaching Washington's tribal history and culture.

Brief Description: Requiring tribal history and culture curriculum.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives McCoy, Rockefeller, Conway, McDermott, Sullivan, Ormsby, Fromhold, Hunt, Lovick, Cooper, Haigh, Anderson, Kenney, Santos, Darneille, Chase, Moeller and Lantz).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 2/25/04, 2/27/04 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Johnson, Chair; Finkbeiner, Vice Chair; Carlson, Eide, McAuliffe, Pflug, Rasmussen and Schmidt.

Staff: Heather Lewis-Lechner (786-7448)

Background: Washington has a Native American history that dates back thousands of years. There currently are 29 federally-recognized Indian tribes whose reservations are located in Washington. Many Northwest Indians still observe the traditions of their ancient ancestors.

Washington's high school graduation requirements include a minimum of one-half credit of course work in Washington history and government. Courses designed to meet this requirement are encouraged to include information on the culture, history, and government of the Native Americans who were the first inhabitants of Washington.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must develop and make available a model curriculum for incorporating Washington's tribal history into existing school district history and social studies courses. The curriculum should be designed to be easily integrated with other disciplines. The SPI must also develop a model tribal outreach program which must meet certain requirements. The model curriculum and outreach program must be completed by December 31, 2004.

School districts are encouraged to adopt the model curriculum and adapt it to acknowledge and recognize local tribal history. School districts are encouraged to supplement the curriculum with information regarding the local tribes and to facilitate opportunities for cultural exchanges with the local tribes.

School districts are encouraged to maintain communications and activities with the local tribes.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill: The reporting requirement for districts is removed and instead, districts are encouraged to maintain communications and activities with local Indian tribes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This bill is a way to show sensitivity to native culture and recognize the great history that tribes have in Washington. This bill creates very little fiscal impact to OSPI and there are federal grant funds available that tribes can apply for in order to fulfill their obligations under this bill. Many of the Native American children do not have a feeling of belonging in school and feel that the spiritual and cultural part of themselves is dying. This bill would help bring Native American culture back into the schools. OSPI has already developed a template for the model curriculum. OSPI can create a curriculum that is user friendly for both the tribes and the districts. Native Americans are an integral part of this country and we need to infuse tribal culture and history into the current curriculum in our schools. The truth about Native American culture and Native Americans needs to be taught. This bill is about developing a collaboration and creating more communication between and within communities and building better relationships. Part of the healing process for Native Americans is about learning about our own culture and people. We are looking at an identity crisis for our young people. The drop out or "push out" rate for Native American students is very high because these students are subjected to cultural insensitivities and discrimination in schools. The rate can range from 25 percent to 95 percent in school districts for Native American students.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Rep. McCoy, prime sponsor; Denny Hurtado, Greg Williamson, OSPI; Cree Whelshula, student, Inchelium School Dist.; Ray James, Lavina Wilkens, Yakama Nation; Patricia Whitefoot, Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians; Aglipina Smith, Nooksack Indian Tribe; Kim Cooper, Squaxin Island Tribe; Suzanne Wright, Tulalip Tribes; Kathryn Romero, student, Western WA Univ.; Sierra Williams, student, Heritage School; Rob Purser, Suquamish Tribe.

Signed In/Did Not Testify: PRO: Larry Davis, State Board of Education; Joe Heimeck, Tulalip Tribe; Lawrence Cordier, Muckleshoot Tribe; Dawn Vyvyan, Yakama Nation.