

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1495

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, March 30, 2005

Title: An act relating to teaching Washington's tribal history, culture, and government in the common schools.

Brief Description: Requiring that tribal history be taught in the common schools.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives McCoy, Roach, Simpson, P. Sullivan, McDermott, Santos, Appleton, Darneille, Williams, Hunt, Haigh, Chase, Sells, Conway, Kenney, Kagi, Moeller, Ormsby and Blake).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/09/05, 78-18.

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 3/25/05, 3/30/05 [DPA, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Carrell, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller and Shin.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Mulliken and Schoesler.

Staff: Ingrid Mungia (786-7423)

Background: There are 29 federally-recognized Indian tribes whose reservations are located in Washington. The Governor's Office of Indian Affairs reports an additional seven tribes in Washington who are non-federally recognized.

Washington's high school graduation requirements include a minimum of one-half credit of course work in Washington State history and government. Courses designed to meet this requirement are encouraged, but not required, to include information on the culture, history, and government of Washington Indian tribes.

The Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) was created for the purpose of coordinating programs and procedures pertaining to the policymaking, control, and management of school districts in the state. The WSSDA reports annually to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) regarding recommendations to increase the efficiency of the common school system.

Summary of Amended Bill: The WSSDA is encouraged to convene regional meetings between local school boards and tribal councils to establish government-to-government relationships. Meetings should be scheduled at least annually beginning in 2006 and through

2010 and should be for the purposes of: (1) developing and implementing curricular materials to teach about the history, culture, and government of Washington Indian tribes; and (2) identifying strategies to close the achievement gap. The WSSDA is directed to report to the Legislature in 2007, 2009, and 2011, regarding the progress made in developing the curricula and the potential for the curricula to contribute to efforts to close the achievement gap.

The one-half credit course in Washington State history required for high school graduation must include information regarding the history, culture, and government of Washington Indian tribes.

School districts are encouraged to incorporate this information into other social studies courses in which Washington or United States history is taught. Districts also are encouraged to facilitate opportunities for cultural exchanges with tribes and to make good faith efforts to collaborate in the development of curricula with tribes whose reservations in whole or in part lie within the school districts' boundaries. The OSPI is encouraged to assist districts in determining the locations of the reservations and traditional lands and territories of Washington Indian tribes.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The Washington State School Directors' Association is encouraged to convene regional meetings and invite the tribal councils from the region. The State Board of Education is required to consider American Indian information to fulfill high school graduation requirements in Washington state history and government. School district boards of directors are encouraged to incorporate curricula about tribes within and near the school district, including tribes within Oregon, Idaho and British Columbia.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: The Washington state American Indian culture should be taught within schools. There is a need to help Native American children close the achievement gap. This bill will help children close the achievement gap because they will feel more comfortable coming to school because they will learn about themselves. Schools currently working with tribes are seeing the achievement gap beginning to close and the drop out rate decline with Native American students. The Colville Tribe deeply supports the bill. The Makah Tribe supports the bill. This is a good bill and very educational for all people. Teaching the history and culture of the Native American community is a good gift to our children. This bill is a great way for tribal governments and the state to communicate better and preserve important tribal lands. The bill is a good approach for teachers, administrators and students. This bill directly addresses the learning environment by providing a large missing link in our history courses. Suspicion, harassment and abuse against Native students is alive in our public schools today, this bill might help. The intent of the bill is laudable and WSSDA supports it, we need improvements in curriculum. It is important school directors and tribal leaders come together to collaborate and work more effectively to affect the academic achievement of Native American students. The traditional courses and textbooks used today in American and

Washington state history are Americanized and a single culture and result in distortion of ethnic identity for both sides. This bill helps all students in the state of Washington.

Testimony Against: None

Who Testified: Pro: Rep. McCoy, sponsor; Allyson Brooks, Office of Archeology and Historic Place; Joe Heineck, Tulalip Heritage High School; Blanchard Matte, Makah Tribe; Jamie Valadez, Lower Elwha Klallom; Tom Speer, Duwamish Tribal Services; Martharose Laffey, WSSDA; Cynthia Frazer, North Thurston student; Joe Pakotis, Colville Tribal Chair; Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition; Steve Robinsen, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission; Anna-Maria Wilson, North Thurston School District; Dylan Campbell, North Thurston School District; Larry Pierce, Washington State Native American Higher Education Coalition.