

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2781

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to enhancing Washington state history and government course requirements for high school graduation.

Brief Description: Enhancing Washington state history and government course requirements for high school graduation.

Sponsors: By Representatives Wallace, Chase, Sells, Conway, Morrell, Haigh, Hankins and Santos.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/29/08, 2/1/08 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/15/08, 91-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 3/4/08, 48-0.

House Concurred.

Passed House: 3/8/08, 89-4.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires enhancement of Washington history and government courses to include content regarding Washington's commerce, place in a global economy, Constitution, politics, geography, history, and culture.
- Encourages instruction on the meaning and history of the pledge of allegiance and requires the adoption of rules to provide guidance.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Barlow, Vice Chair; Haigh, Lias, Roach, Santos and Sullivan.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Cece Clynch (786-7195).

Background:

High school graduation requirements are established by the State Board of Education. Current graduation requirements include two and one-half credits in social studies. At least one credit of this total must cover U.S. history and government, and one-half credit is required in Washington history and government. Study of the U.S. and Washington Constitutions is a requisite part of these courses. State law encourages, but does not require, that the Washington history and government course include information about the history, culture, and government of the American Indian people.

Beginning with the 2008-09 school year, students in the 11th or 12th grades must complete at least one classroom based assessment in civics.

Summary of Bill:

Beginning with the 2009-10 school year, school districts are required to ensure that Washington history and government courses include the following content:

- commerce in Washington and Washington's place in the global economy;
- the Washington State Constitution and Washington politics;
- Washington geography; and,
- Washington history and culture.

Educators are encouraged to also include instruction on the meaning and history of the pledge of allegiance. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction must adopt rules to provide guidance for complying with the provision regarding instruction about Washington's Constitution, politics, and the pledge of allegiance

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Students want Washington history and geography courses to be more relevant. Already, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has drafted new modules for these courses. It is important that these courses go beyond teaching about Lewis and Clark and the fur traders. Students should also learn about Washington's government, geography,

and Constitution. Future students will be better prepared if they understand the state's place in the global economy.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Wallace, prime sponsor; and Patti McMaster, Corina Popescu, Dom Harris, Sarah Lopez, Jon Egan, and Katitlin Sandin, Evergreen High School.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.