

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HB 2781

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 28, 2008

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

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

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/28/08 [DPA].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Hobbs, Holmquist, Kauffman, McDermott, Oemig and Weinstein.

**Staff:** Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

**Background:** Under Washington law, the State Board of Education (SBE) establishes high school graduation requirements for students. Current SBE graduation requirements include two and one-half credits in social studies. One credit must be in United States history and government, which must include the study of the U.S. Constitution. One-half credit must be in Washington state history and government, which includes the study of the Washington Constitution. One credit must be in contemporary world history, geography, and problems.

State law encourages any course in Washington state history and government to include information on the culture, history, and government of the American Indian people who were the first inhabitants of the state. State law also requires the study of the U.S. and Washington Constitutions as a prerequisite to graduation from public and private high schools. Beginning with the 2008-09 school year, school districts must require students in the fourth or fifth grade, seventh or eighth grade, and the eleventh or twelfth grade to complete at least one classroom-based assessment in civics.

**Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments):** Beginning with the 2009-10 school year, school districts must ensure that any course in Washington State history and government offered to fulfill high school requirements, includes, but is not limited to: Washington's commerce and place in a global economy; the Washington Constitution and politics;

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Washington geography; and Washington history and culture. Educators are encouraged to incorporate the meaning and history of the Pledge of Allegiance into existing coursework on state politics. The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must adopt rules to provide guidance for teaching the meaning and history of the Pledge of Allegiance.

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Amedments):** Educators are encouraged to incorporate the meaning and history of the Pledge of Allegiance into existing coursework on state politics. The SPI must adopt rules to provide guidance for teaching the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The Washington history text books need to be more relevant. Students are disappointed by the current Pacific Northwest History curriculum. Learning about fur traders is not very useful; Washington students need a solid understanding about the Washington's constitution, economy, political candidates, and government.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Wallace, prime sponsor; Jonathan Egan, Corina Popescu, Andrew Nichols, Kaitlin Sandin, Sarah Lopez, Chelsea Pyper, Patti McMaster, JJ Wampach, Evergreen High School.