

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5374

As of January 29, 2021

Title: An act relating to requiring students to study political systems and the negative effects of communism.

Brief Description: Requiring students to study political systems and the negative effects of communism.

Sponsors: Senators Honeyford, Wilson, J. and Fortunato.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/01/21.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the study of the history and negative effects of communism as a condition prerequisite to graduation from public schools.
- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt a rule permitting students who take the Heritage Guide to the Constitution as meeting the prerequisite that students study the constitutions of the United States and Washington State before graduating from a public or private school.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: Graduation Requirements. Washington State students must meet various requirements in order to graduate high school and receive a diploma. Students must:

- complete 24 credits in specified subject areas as determined by the State Board of Education, including seven elective credits;
- complete a High School and Beyond Plan;

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- meet the requirements of at least one graduation pathway, such as meeting statewide assessment standards, earning credit in dual credit courses, or achieving a particular score on an advanced placement (AP) exam, the SAT, or ACT; and
- satisfy any local requirements.

Study of the Constitution. Under current statute, the study of the United States and Washington State constitutions is a condition prerequisite to graduation from public and private high schools in Washington.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction is permitted to allow students to meet this prerequisite through noncredit-based study.

Heritage Foundation. The Heritage Foundation is a public-policy organization based in Washington, D.C. According to their website, Heritage is "an organization whose mission is to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense."

The Heritage Guide to the Constitution is a work published by the organization that features analysis of the United States Constitution by legal scholars.

Summary of Bill: The Study of Communism. In addition to the study of the constitutions of the United States and Washington State, the study of history and negative effects of communism shall be a condition prerequisite to graduation from a public high school in Washington. The study of communism must also include the number of deaths under communist leaders.

Constitutional Study Prerequisite. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall adopt a rule permitting students who take the Heritage Guide to the Constitution to meet the constitutional study prerequisite for graduation from public and private high schools in Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 28, 2021.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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