

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6432

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 6, 1998

Title: An act relating to compulsory study of the United States Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Brief Description: Requiring at least one school day per year of instruction in the United States Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Sponsors: Senators Benton, Long, Heavey, Zarelli, Swecker, Rossi, Roach, Morton, McCaslin, Deccio, T. Sheldon, Stevens, West, Johnson, Sellar, Strannigan, Schow and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 1/29/98, 2/6/98 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hochstatter, Chair; Finkbeiner, Vice Chair; Johnson and Zarelli.

Staff: William Bridges (786-7424)

Background: The State Board of Education requires one semester of instruction in Washington State history for grades one through six. As prerequisites to high school graduation, the board requires the following: (1) grades seven through 12 must study one semester of Washington State history, including the study of the Washington State Constitution; and (2) grades nine through 12 must study two semesters of United States history, including the study of the United States Constitution.

Summary of Bill: Kindergarten through grade 12 students must study the United States Constitution and the Declaration of Independence at least one school day per year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: First, it will help those citizens who are unaware of our nation's founding principles, and who do not understand how our government works. Second, it will ensure that the United States will remain a free society. Third, it is important for those who will lead us in the next century to know our founding principles. Fourth, it is necessary so that citizens do not lose sight of why the United States exists. Fifth, current education reform does not adequately address this issue. Sixth, it will provide a consistent education for

students who move from district to district. Seventh, current law does not adequately highlight the importance of our founding documents.

Testimony Against: It is redundant; current law already requires the study of our founding documents. It is another mandate that will weaken local control.

Testified: Senator Don Benton (pro); Jack Bronger, citizen (pro); Lloyd Gardner, citizen (pro); Steve Getsinger, high school teacher (con); Shavana Schilling, Wash. State Grange (pro).