STATE OF NEW YORK

8959

IN SENATE

January 21, 2026

Introduced by Sen. WEBER -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to requirements for a course of instruction relating to the potato famine in Ireland

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Subdivisions 1 and 3 of section 801 of the education law, as amended by section 27 of part A of chapter 56 of the laws of 2020, are amended to read as follows:

1. In order to promote a spirit of patriotic and civic service and obligation and to foster in the children of the state moral and intellectual qualities which are essential in preparing to meet the obligations of citizenship in peace or in war, the regents of The University of the State of New York shall prescribe courses of instruction in patriotism, citizenship, civic education and values, our shared history of diversity, the role of religious tolerance in this country, and human rights issues, with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity of genocide, slavery (including the freedom trail and underground railroad), the Holocaust, and the **potato famine which resulted in** mass starvation in Ireland from 1845 to 1850, to be maintained and followed in all the schools of the state. The boards of education and trustees of the several cities and school districts of the state shall require instruction to be given in such courses, by the teachers employed in the schools therein. All pupils attending such schools, over the age of eight years, shall attend upon such instruction.

Similar courses of instruction shall be prescribed and maintained in private schools in the state, and all pupils in such schools over eight years of age shall attend upon such courses. If such courses are not so established and maintained in a private school, attendance upon instruction in such school shall not be deemed substantially equivalent to instruction given to pupils of like age in the public schools of the city or district in which such pupils reside.

3. The regents shall determine the subjects to be included in such courses of instruction in patriotism, citizenship, civic education and

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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values, our shared history of diversity, the role of history of diversity, the role of religious tolerance in this country, and human rights issues, with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity of genocide, slavery (including the freedom trail and underground railroad), the Holocaust, and the **potato famine which resulted in** mass starvation in Ireland from 1845 to 1850, **in accordance with section eight hundred one-b of this article,** and in the history, meaning, significance and effect of the provisions of the constitution of the United States, the amendments thereto, the declaration of independence, the constitution of the state of New York and the amendments thereto, and the period of instruction in each of the grades in such subjects. They shall adopt rules providing for attendance upon such instruction and for such other matters as are required for carrying into effect the objects and purposes of this section. The commissioner shall be responsible for the enforcement of such section and shall cause to be inspected and supervise the instruction to be given in such subjects. The commissioner may, in [~~his~~] **their** discretion, cause all or a portion of the public school money to be apportioned to a district or city to be withheld for failure of the school authorities of such district or city to provide instruction in such courses and to compel attendance upon such instruction, as herein prescribed, and for a non-compliance with the rules of the regents adopted as herein provided.

§ 2. The education law is amended by adding a new section 801-b to read as follows:

§ 801-b. Instruction relating to the Irish potato famine. Every public elementary school and high school shall include in its curriculum a unit of instruction studying the potato famine which resulted in mass starvation in Ireland from 1845 to 1850.

§ 3. This act shall take effect on the first of July next succeeding the date on which it shall have become a law.