

STATE OF NEW YORK

9710

IN ASSEMBLY

February 6, 2020

Introduced by M. of A. STERN -- read once and referred to the Committee on Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to requirements for a course of instruction relating to the Holocaust and genocide

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

1 Section 1. Subdivisions 1 and 3 of section 801 of the education law,
2 as amended by chapter 574 of the laws of 1997, are amended to read as
3 follows:

4 1. In order to promote a spirit of patriotic and civic service and
5 obligation and to foster in the children of the state moral and intel-
6 lectual qualities which are essential in preparing to meet the obli-
7 gations of citizenship in peace or in war, the regents of The University
8 of the State of New York shall prescribe courses of instruction in
9 patriotism, citizenship, and human rights issues, with particular atten-
10 tion to the study of the inhumanity of genocide, slavery (including the
11 freedom trail and underground railroad), the Holocaust, and the mass
12 starvation in Ireland from 1845 to 1850, in accordance with section
13 eight hundred one-b of this article, to be maintained and followed in
14 all the schools of the state. The boards of education and trustees of
15 the several cities and school districts of the state shall require
16 instruction to be given in such courses, by the teachers employed in the
17 schools therein. All pupils attending such schools, over the age of
18 eight years, shall attend upon such instruction.

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

26 3. The regents shall determine the subjects to be included in such
27 courses of instruction in patriotism, citizenship, and human rights
28 issues, with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity of

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

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1 genocide, slavery (including the freedom trail and underground rail-
2 road), the Holocaust, and the mass starvation in Ireland from 1845 to
3 1850, in accordance with section eight hundred one-b of this article,
4 and in the history, meaning, significance and effect of the provisions
5 of the constitution of the United States, the amendments thereto, the
6 declaration of independence, the constitution of the state of New York
7 and the amendments thereto, and the period of instruction in each of the
8 grades in such subjects. They shall adopt rules providing for attendance
9 upon such instruction and for such other matters as are required for
10 carrying into effect the objects and purposes of this section. The
11 commissioner shall be responsible for the enforcement of such section
12 and shall cause to be inspected and supervise the instruction to be
13 given in such subjects. The commissioner may, in his discretion, cause
14 all or a portion of the public school money to be apportioned to a
15 district or city to be withheld for failure of the school authorities of
16 such district or city to provide instruction in such courses and to
17 compel attendance upon such instruction, as herein prescribed, and for a
18 non-compliance with the rules of the regents adopted as herein provided.
19 § 2. The education law is amended by adding a new section 801-b to
20 read as follows:

21 § 801-b. Instruction relating to the Holocaust and genocide. Every
22 public elementary school and high school shall include in its curriculum
23 a unit of instruction studying the events of the Nazi atrocities of 1933
24 to 1945. This period in world history is known as the Holocaust, during
25 which six million Jewish people, including one and one-half million
26 Jewish children, and millions of non-Jews were exterminated. One of the
27 universal lessons of the Holocaust is that national, ethnic, racial, or
28 religious hatred can overtake any nation or society, leading to calami-
29 tous consequences. To reinforce that lesson, such curriculum shall
30 include an additional unit of instruction studying other acts of geno-
31 cide across the globe. This unit shall include, but not be limited to,
32 the Armenian Genocide, the Famine-Genocide in Ukraine, and more recent
33 atrocities in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Sudan. The studying of this
34 material is a reaffirmation of the commitment of free peoples from all
35 nations to never again permit the occurrence of another Holocaust and a
36 recognition that crimes of genocide continue to be perpetrated across
37 the globe as they have been in the past and to deter indifference to
38 crimes against humanity and human suffering wherever they may occur. The
39 commissioner may prepare and make available to all school boards
40 instructional materials which may be used as guidelines for development
41 of a unit of instruction under this section; provided, however, that
42 each school board shall itself determine the minimum amount of instruc-
43 tion time which shall qualify as a unit of instruction satisfying the
44 requirements of this section. The cost for instructional materials is to
45 be borne by the department.

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