STATE OF NEW YORK

4734

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

February 8, 2021

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:

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 mass starvation in Ireland from 1845 to 1850, **in accordance with section eight hundred one-b of this article,** 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

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

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

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