

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:

1 Section 1. Subdivisions 1 and 3 of section 801 of the education law,
2 as amended by section 27 of part A of chapter 56 of the laws of 2020,
3 are amended to read as 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, civic education and values, our shared history
10 of diversity, the role of religious tolerance in this country, and human
11 rights issues, with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity
12 of genocide, slavery (including the freedom trail and underground rail-
13 road), the Holocaust, and the mass starvation in Ireland from 1845 to
14 1850, in accordance with section eight hundred one-b of this article, to
15 be maintained and followed in all the schools of the state. The boards
16 of education and trustees of the several cities and school districts of
17 the state shall require instruction to be given in such courses, by the
18 teachers employed in the schools therein. All pupils attending such
19 schools, over the age of eight years, shall attend upon such instruc-
20 tion.

21 Similar courses of instruction shall be prescribed and maintained in
22 private schools in the state, and all pupils in such schools over eight
23 years of age shall attend upon such courses. If such courses are not so
24 established and maintained in a private school, attendance upon instruc-
25 tion 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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1 instruction given to pupils of like age in the public schools of the
2 city or district in which such pupils reside.

3 3. The regents shall determine the subjects to be included in such
4 courses of instruction in patriotism, citizenship, civic education and
5 values, our shared history of diversity, the role of history of diversity,
6 the role of religious tolerance in this country, and human rights
7 issues, with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity of
8 genocide, slavery (including the freedom trail and underground rail-
9 road), the Holocaust, and the mass starvation in Ireland from 1845 to
10 1850, in accordance with section eight hundred one-b of this article,
11 and in the history, meaning, significance and effect of the provisions
12 of the constitution of the United States, the amendments thereto, the
13 declaration of independence, the constitution of the state of New York
14 and the amendments thereto, and the period of instruction in each of the
15 grades in such subjects. They shall adopt rules providing for attendance
16 upon such instruction and for such other matters as are required for
17 carrying into effect the objects and purposes of this section. The
18 commissioner shall be responsible for the enforcement of such section
19 and shall cause to be inspected and supervise the instruction to be
20 given in such subjects. The commissioner may, in his discretion, cause
21 all or a portion of the public school money to be apportioned to a
22 district or city to be withheld for failure of the school authorities of
23 such district or city to provide instruction in such courses and to
24 compel attendance upon such instruction, as herein prescribed, and for a
25 non-compliance with the rules of the regents adopted as herein provided.

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

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

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