
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Connie Leyva, Chair

2019 - 2020 Regular

Bill No: SCR 6 **Hearing Date:** March 20, 2019
Author: Nielsen
Version: January 22, 2019
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Chanel Matney

Subject: Celebrate Freedom Week.

SUMMARY

This resolution calls upon public schools maintaining any of grades K-12, inclusive, to recognize the week of September 15, 2019, to September 21, 2019, as Celebrate Freedom Week.

BACKGROUND

Celebrate Freedom Week is intended to highlight the origins of the United States government with particular emphasis on the role of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. It is officially recognized in five states, including Arkansas, Florida, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. While specifications differ state to state, Celebrate Freedom Week in these five states is a mandate requiring public school curriculums to, in general, “educate students about the sacrifices made for freedom in the founding of this country and the values on which this country was founded” with a focus on the founding documents.

With the exception of Oklahoma, Celebrate Freedom Week is observed on or near the week that includes Constitution Day, a federally holiday requiring public schools to recognize the anniversary of the ratification of the United States Constitution on September 17. Oklahoma observes the holiday during the week that includes Veterans Day, November 11.

ANALYSIS

SCR 6 resolves that the Legislature recognize that September 15, 2019, through September 21, 2019, as Celebrate Freedom Week in public schools with any of grades K-12, inclusive. This resolution also resolves that the Legislature call upon all public schools maintaining any of grades K-12, inclusive, to honor Constitution Day, which is typically observed on September 17.

Additionally, this resolution:

- 1) Promotes that students should discuss the intent, meaning, importance, and historical context of the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, with an emphasis on the Preamble and the Bill of Rights.

- 2) Provides that students should be educated about the significance of these documents to the founding of the United States, the articulation of this nation's values, to subsequent American history.
- 3) Promotes the celebration of the American Revolution, the drafting of the United States Constitution, the abolitionist movement, the Emancipation Proclamation, women's suffrage, and America's racial and ethnic diversity.
- 4) Encourages students to study and recite the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed".

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, "Currently in California, 8th grade students are required to study the United States Constitution and related documents to better understand our nation's founding and the bountiful freedoms that are given to us through said documents. Records of such importance should be shared with all ages in a manner appropriate to each age group.

"It is the goal of Senate Concurrent Resolution 6 to promote the teaching of the United States Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, and related American historical documents, starting in kindergarten up through grades 1 through 12."

"Celebrate Freedom Week will celebrate the rich diversity of our people as a nation of immigrants through the Emancipation Proclamation, women's suffrage, and our unalienable rights as designated in the United States Constitution."

- 2) ***Local discretion.*** SCR 6 resolves that the Legislature recognizes Celebrate Freedom Week and Constitution Day in academic year 2019-2020, and provides guidance as to which founding documents and historical events should be the focus of instruction and discussion. Within these provisions, public schools retain authority to supervise how Celebrate Freedom Week and Constitution Day shall be observed, if at all.
- 3) ***Original text.*** The resolution encourages students to study and recite the opening lines of the Declaration of Independence. While this original text uses exclusively gendered language ("all *men* are created equal") and includes anachronistic references to a "Creator", this language is highlighted for instruction as it relates to an early articulation of an American philosophy of governance focused on the protection the people's unalienable and fundamental rights.
- 4) ***Previous legislation.***

AB 2525 (Education Committee, Ch. 896, 2003) required the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) to revise the history-social science curriculum framework to include the following historical documents: The Declaration of Independence; the United States Constitution, including the Bill of Rights; The Federalist Papers; the Emancipation Proclamation; the Gettysburg Address; and George Washington's Farewell Address.

AB 1599 (Education Committee, Ch. 327, 2014) allowed the IQC to consider incorporating the following historical documents into the history-social framework: The Magna Carta, The Articles of Confederation, and the California Constitution.

SUPPORT

None received

OPPOSITION

None received

-- END --