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Bill Analysis
Legislative Service Commission

S.B. 220
123rd General Assembly
(As Introduced)

Sens. Prentiss, Brady, Fingerhut

BILL SUMMARY

- Changes model citizenship curriculum to include the subjects of racism, genocide, and religious persecution.
- Provides for the revision of the citizenship portion of the proficiency tests to evaluate knowledge of the history, causes, and effects of racism, genocide, and religious persecution.

CONTENT AND OPERATION

Changes to model citizenship curriculum

The core educational subjects of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and citizenship each have a model curriculum designed by the State Board of Education. The field of social studies falls within the model citizenship curriculum. (Sec. 3301.0716, not in the bill.) While the current curriculum addresses issues of race and discrimination, they are subsumed under other headings rather than being a self-contained unit of study. The bill generates more attention to the topics of racism, genocide, and religious persecution by making them explicit components of the model curriculum.

Under the bill, the model citizenship curriculum would emphasize the historical context of racism, genocide, and religious persecution in Ohio, the United States, and the world and its relevance for contemporary times. Specific topics concerning racial/ethnic and religious persecution among those included in the curriculum would be slavery, "Jim Crow" laws, the Holocaust, Indian wars in the United States, ethnic cleansing, and anti-sectarian movements. The curriculum also would require an exploration of the relationship of economics to discrimination and the long-term consequences of institutionalized discrimination for society, as well as for the victims of ethnic or religious persecution or hate crimes (sec. 3301.0721).

The bill directs the State Board of Education to establish, within 30 days of its effective date, an advisory panel to assist in the rewriting of the model citizenship curriculum. The panel's membership must represent the racial, ethnic, and religious diversity of Ohio and include teachers and curriculum experts in social studies such as history, government, sociology, and economics. The Board has one year from the effective date of the act to complete its revisions. (Section 3.) Upon completion of the revisions, the Department of Education would institute a professional development program for primary and secondary teachers who teach citizenship to familiarize them with the new curriculum and to train them in methods of implementing the curriculum in the classroom (Section 4).

Revision of proficiency tests

(sec. 3301.0710)

Current law requires students in the fourth, sixth, tenth, and twelfth grades to take standardized tests to demonstrate their proficiency in the subjects of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and citizenship. Historically, the expectations established by the Department of Education's model curriculums have included learning outcomes from which the questions for the proficiency tests are derived. The bill requires the State Board of Education to revise the proficiency tests so that students must demonstrate knowledge of the historical development and contemporary manifestations of racism, genocide, and religious persecution.

HISTORY

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