



John Rau

## *Bill Analysis*

*Legislative Service Commission*

### **H.B. 461**

124th General Assembly  
(As Introduced)

**Reps. Fessler, Grendell, Faber, Husted, Young, Blasdel, Brinkman, DeWine, Latta, Lendrum, Reidelbach, Roman, Schaffer, Webster, Willamowski, Boccieri, Seaver, Carano**

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### **BILL SUMMARY**

- Specifies that the study of American history and American government as required in the high school curriculum must include the study of the Declaration of Independence, the Northwest Ordinance, the U.S. Constitution with emphasis on the Bill of Rights, and the Ohio Constitution for the cumulative equivalent of at least one-sixth unit (20 hours) of instruction.
- Requires that the study of the Declaration of Independence, the Northwest Ordinance, and the U.S. Constitution in the high school curriculum include the study of those documents in their original 18th-Century context.

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### **CONTENT AND OPERATION**

#### **Background**

Each school district board of education and educational service center governing board is required under continuing law to prescribe a curriculum for all schools under the board's control. That curriculum must include instruction in the language arts, specified social studies, mathematics, natural science, health education, physical education, the fine arts, and safety.<sup>1</sup> State law provides more specific requirements for the *high school* curriculum. In order to graduate from high school a student must complete at least 20 units of study in specified areas including 7 units of elective courses. Generally, one unit means a minimum of

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<sup>1</sup> R.C. 3313.60(A).

120 hours of classroom instruction.<sup>2</sup> Of these 20 units, current law requires that a student complete 3 units of social science, of which one-half unit must be in each of the subjects of American history and American government.<sup>3</sup>

**Requirement that the high school curriculum include the study of specified historical documents**

The bill provides that instruction in American history and American government in the high school curriculum must include the study of the Declaration of Independence, the Northwest Ordinance, the U.S. Constitution with emphasis on the Bill of Rights, and the Ohio Constitution. These documents must be studied for the cumulative equivalent of at least one-sixth unit (or 20 hours of classroom instruction). In addition, the bill requires that classroom time allocated to the Declaration of Independence, the Northwest Ordinance, and the U.S. Constitution include study of those documents in their original 18th-Century context. It also specifies that "the role of documents such as the Federalist Papers and the Anti-Federalist Papers [be studied] to firmly establish the historical background leading to the establishment of the provisions of the Constitution and Bill of Rights by the founding fathers for the purpose of safeguarding our constitutional republic."<sup>4</sup>

**Social studies high school curriculum**

As noted above, current law requires 3 units of social studies in the high school curriculum, of which one-half unit must be in each of the subjects of American history and American government. The bill separates the one unit of American history and American government from the other two units of required social studies instruction.<sup>5</sup> Presumably, students could take additional instruction in history and government as well other social studies courses to satisfy the two-unit requirement.

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<sup>2</sup> For a laboratory course, "one unit" means a minimum of 150 hours of instruction. The statute also specifies that "one-half unit" means a minimum of 60 hours of instruction, except for physical education courses, where "one-half unit" means a minimum of 120 hours of instruction. (R.C. 3313.603(A).) Only 6 units of electives are required after September 15, 2003, when 3 instead of 2 units of science will be required. Of the electives, one unit or two half-units must be in business/technology, fine arts, or foreign language.

<sup>3</sup> R.C. 3313.60(C) and 3313.603(B)(6).

<sup>4</sup> R.C. 3313.603(B)(6)(b).

<sup>5</sup> R.C. 3313.603(B)(7).

On the other hand, the bill also prescribes that before a student may participate in *high school* courses that involve "the study of social problems, economics, foreign affairs, the United Nations, world history and government, socialism, and communism, [the student must] first complete basic instruction in geography, United States history [and] government. . . , the government of the state of Ohio, local government in Ohio, the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Constitution of the state of Ohio."<sup>6</sup> This provision is essentially identical to a provision of current law generally applicable to a school district's entire K-12 curriculum. The bill eliminates this current provision.<sup>7</sup>

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## HISTORY

ACTION	DATE	JOURNAL ENTRY
Introduced	01-02-02	p. 1183

h0461-i.124/kl

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<sup>6</sup> R.C. 3313.603(B)(7).

<sup>7</sup> R.C. 3313.60(D). *The current provision was enacted in Am. Sub. H.B. 76 of the 101st General Assembly (effective May 5, 1955).*