

Labor

AB 172 – Mandatory Labor History Instruction

Rep. Jorgensen

Summary of Bill:

Assembly Bill 172 requires that every school board's instructional program in state, national, and world history include information on the history of organized labor in America and the collective bargaining process.

Fiscal Effect:

The Department of Public Instruction states that school districts may incur costs to change their history curriculum, but it is assumed these costs would be minimal and could be absorbed by school districts. DPI also notes some districts may already teach labor history to meet performance standards set in the Model Academic Standards.

Supporters Message:

- Teaching about organized labor has largely been ignored in our schools.
- Much of history focuses on corporate leaders and politicians; rarely do school children hear about the heroes among our working people who struggled to bring equity and justice into the workplace.
- Labor unions are part of Wisconsin's heritage and many families have a labor tradition.

Opponents Message:

- Mandating specific curriculum sets a dangerous precedent for the Legislature's role in education and will open the door to many special-interest and agenda-driven specific requirements.
- How general state education requirements are followed is best left up to individual school districts.
- National history and civics assessments show that many students can't identify the opening passage of the Declaration of Independence or explain the basic workings of our three branches of government. When the basics aren't being met, how can we approve new mandates?

Key Supporters:

Representative Andy Jorgensen (author); Senator Dave Hansen (author); AFT-Wisconsin; Operating Engineers Local #139; United Transportation Union; WEAC; AFL-CIO; WI Labor History Society. International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Construction Electrician Local Unions

Key Opponents:

Association of WI School Administrators; WI Association of School Boards. Registering on the GAB web site in opposition: Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators Wisconsin Council for Administrators of Special Services

Committee Vote:

On April 16, 2009, the Assembly Committee on Labor recommended passage of AB 172 on a vote of 5-3-1. [Honadel, Nass, and Knodl voted No; Soletski absent]

Ranking Member Author of Bill Summary

Jason Vick; Office of Rep. Mark Honadel (6-0610).