

By Senator Wise

5-108A-03

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to American Sign Language;
3 providing legislative findings and purpose;
4 allowing foreign-language credits for
5 instruction in American Sign Language;
6 providing duties of the Secretary of Education
7 and the State Board of Education; providing for
8 a task force and prescribing its duties;
9 requiring teachers of American Sign Language to
10 be licensed by a specified date; providing a
11 plan for postsecondary institutions; providing
12 an effective date.

14 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

16 Section 1. American Sign Language; findings;
17 foreign-language credits authorized; teacher licensing.--

18 (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS; PURPOSE.--

19 (a) The Legislature finds that:

20 1. American Sign Language (ASL) is a fully developed
21 visual-gestural language with distinct grammar, syntax, and
22 symbols and is one of hundreds of signed languages of the
23 world.

24 2. ASL is recognized as the language of the American
25 deaf community and is the fourth most commonly used language
26 in the United States and Canada.

27 3. The American deaf community is a group of citizens
28 who are members of a unique culture who share ASL as their
29 common language.

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1 4. Thirty-three state legislatures have adopted
2 legislation recognizing ASL as a language that should be
3 taught in schools.

4 (b) It is the intent of the Legislature to recognize
5 ASL as the language of the American deaf community, to
6 authorize public and independent schools to offer ASL as a
7 course of study, and to accept secondary-school ASL credits as
8 foreign-language credits.

9 (2) AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE; FOREIGN-LANGUAGE CREDIT.--

10 (a) American Sign Language is a visual-gestural system
11 of communication used by many in the deaf community living in
12 the United States and Canada. It is a complete and complex
13 language that has its own syntax, rhetoric, and grammar and
14 that is used to convey information and meaning through signs
15 made with the hands, arms, facial gestures, and other body
16 movements.

17 (b) Any public or independent school may offer
18 American Sign Language for foreign-language credit.

19 (3) DUTIES OF SECRETARY OF EDUCATION AND STATE BOARD
20 OF EDUCATION; LICENSING OF AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS;
21 PLAN FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PROVIDERS.--

22 (a) The Secretary of Education shall appoint a
23 seven-member task force that includes representatives from at
24 least two state universities and one private college or
25 university located within this state which currently offer a
26 4-year deaf-education or sign-language-interpretation program
27 as a part of their respective curricula and at least two
28 representatives from community colleges located within this
29 state which have established Interpreter Training Programs
30 (ITPs). This task force shall develop and submit to the
31 Secretary of Education a report that contains the most

1 up-to-date information about American Sign Language (ASL) and
2 guidelines for developing and maintaining ASL courses as a
3 part of the curriculum. This information must be made
4 available to any administrator of a public or an independent
5 school upon request of the administrator.

6 (b) By January 1, 2004, the State Board of Education
7 shall adopt rules establishing licensing/certification
8 standards to be applied to teachers who teach ASL as part of a
9 school curriculum. In developing the rules, the board shall
10 consult with the task force established under paragraph (a).

11 (c) An ASL teacher must be certified by the Department
12 of Education by January 1, 2008, and must obtain current
13 certification through the American Sign Language Teachers'
14 Association by January 1, 2004.

15 (d) The Secretary of Education shall work with
16 providers of postsecondary education to develop and implement
17 a plan to ensure that postsecondary institutions in this state
18 will accept secondary school credits in ASL as credits in a
19 foreign language and to encourage postsecondary institutions
20 to offer ASL courses to students as a fulfillment of the
21 requirement for studying a foreign language.

22 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2003.

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25 SENATE SUMMARY

26 Provides legislative findings and purpose relating to
27 American Sign Language. Allows public and independent
28 schools to give foreign-language credits for instruction
29 in American Sign Language. Provides duties of the
30 Secretary of Education and the State Board of Education
31 relating to encouraging postsecondary institutions to
accept ASL credits as foreign-language credits. Provides
for a task force and prescribes its duties. Requires
teachers of American Sign Language to be licensed by a
specified date.