

By the Committee on Education; and Senators Wise and Fasano

304-2042-03

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 requiring notice of limitations; providing
7 duties of the Commissioner of Education and the
8 State Board of Education; providing for a task
9 force and prescribing its duties; requiring
10 teachers of American Sign Language to be
11 licensed by a specified date; providing a plan
12 for postsecondary institutions; providing an
13 effective date.

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

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

19 (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS; PURPOSE.--

20 (a) The Legislature finds that:

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

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

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

31

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. Students
19 taking American Sign Language for foreign-language credit must
20 be advised by the school board prior to enrollment in such
21 course that postsecondary institutions outside of Florida may
22 not accept such credits as satisfying foreign-language
23 requirements.

24 (3) DUTIES OF COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION AND STATE
25 BOARD OF EDUCATION; LICENSING OF AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE
26 TEACHERS; PLAN FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PROVIDERS.--

27 (a) The Commissioner of Education shall appoint a
28 seven-member task force that includes representatives from at
29 least two state universities and one private college or
30 university located within this state which currently offer a
31 4-year deaf-education or sign-language-interpretation program

1 as a part of their respective curricula and at least two
2 representatives from community colleges located within this
3 state which have established Interpreter Training Programs
4 (ITPs). This task force shall develop and submit to the
5 Commissioner of Education a report that contains the most
6 up-to-date information about American Sign Language (ASL) and
7 guidelines for developing and maintaining ASL courses as a
8 part of the curriculum. This information must be made
9 available to any administrator of a public or an independent
10 school upon request of the administrator.

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

16 (c) An ASL teacher must be certified by the Department
17 of Education by January 1, 2008, and must obtain current
18 certification through the American Sign Language Teachers'
19 Association by January 1, 2004.

20 (d) The Commissioner of Education shall work with
21 providers of postsecondary education to develop and implement
22 a plan to ensure that postsecondary institutions in this state
23 will accept secondary school credits in ASL as credits in a
24 foreign language and to encourage postsecondary institutions
25 to offer ASL courses to students as a fulfillment of the
26 requirement for studying a foreign language.

27 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2003.
28
29
30
31

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31

STATEMENT OF SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES CONTAINED IN
COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
Senate Bill 162

Requires that school boards advise students taking American Sign Language as a foreign language that post-secondary schools outside of Florida may not accept these courses as satisfying foreign language requirements.

Includes technical changes.