

1 S.87

2 Introduced by Senators Lyons and Ram Hinsdale

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Education; Holocaust education

6 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require
7 Vermont public schools to include Holocaust education in supervisory union-
8 wide curricula for grades six through 12 each year, beginning in the 2024–
9 2025 school year. This bill also proposes to require the Agency of Education
10 to provide assistance in the development and maintenance of Holocaust
11 education.

12 An act relating to Holocaust education in public schools

13 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

14 Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

15 This act may be cited as the “Vermont Holocaust Studies Act.”

16 Sec. 2. FINDINGS

17 (a) The Vermont General Assembly finds and declares that per the Never
18 Again Education Act, Pub. L. No. 116-141, enacted by the U.S. Congress on
19 May 29, 2020, “the United States works to promote Holocaust education as a
20 means to understand the importance of democratic principles, use and abuse of

1 power, and to raise awareness about the importance of genocide prevention
2 today.”

3 (b) According to the Anti-Defamation League, over the past decade there
4 has been a marked surge in antisemitic and racist violence in the United States
5 and Europe.

6 (c) Education is key to combating hate. By learning about the Holocaust,
7 students will understand how stereotypes, prejudice, and religious and ethnic
8 hatred can escalate to atrocity. The lessons of the Holocaust not only teach
9 about the past but also shape our future as a human race. Students must
10 understand that it happened and it can happen again.

11 Sec. 3. 16 V.S.A. § 914 is added to read:

12 § 914. HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

13 (a) Each supervisory union shall ensure a minimum of six hours of age-
14 and grade-appropriate instruction on the Holocaust is included in the union-
15 wide curricula each year for grades six through 12. The instruction shall be
16 integrated within the global citizenship or English language arts content areas.
17 Instruction may also be integrated into other content areas.

18 (b) Instruction required under this section shall be designed to:

19 (1) enable students to evaluate the morality of the Holocaust and to
20 reflect on the causes of related historical events;

1 (2) help students gain insight into the importance of the protection of
2 international human rights for all persons;

3 (3) promote students' understanding of how the Holocaust revealed the
4 need for the term genocide and led to international legislation that recognized
5 genocide as a crime;

6 (4) stimulate students' reflection on the roles and responsibilities of
7 citizens in democratic societies to combat misinformation, indifference, and
8 discrimination through tools such as nonviolent protest, reform, or social and
9 cultural movements;

10 (5) provide students with opportunities to contextualize and analyze
11 patterns of behavior by individuals and groups who belong in one or more
12 categories, including perpetrator, collaborator, bystander, upstander, victim,
13 and rescuer;

14 (6) enable students to understand the ramifications of prejudice, racism,
15 and stereotyping;

16 (7) preserve the memories of Holocaust survivors and provide
17 opportunities for students to discuss and honor survivors' legacies;

18 (8) provide students with a foundation for examining the history of
19 discrimination; and

20 (9) explore the various mechanisms of transitional and restorative justice
21 that helped humanity move forward in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

1 (c) The Agency of Education shall provide technical assistance to
2 supervisory unions and school districts for the purpose of providing the
3 instruction required by this section. The assistance shall:

4 (1) identify sources, strategies, and content for providing and enhancing
5 Holocaust education to students;

6 (2) advise superintendents and headmasters of approved independent
7 schools in Vermont on strategies and content for Holocaust education;

8 (3) identify programs and sources of professional development related to
9 providing Holocaust education;

10 (4) promote in schools and to the general population of Vermont
11 implementation of Holocaust education; and

12 (5) carry out any other tasks it considers to be advisable to support the
13 ability of the State to meet the goals of providing Holocaust education.

14 (d) As used in this section:

15 (1) “Genocide” means any of the following acts committed with intent
16 to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group:

17 (A) killing members of the group;

18 (B) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

19 (C) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to
20 bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

1 (D) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

2 or

3 (E) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

4 (2) “Holocaust” means the systemic, bureaucratic, and state-sponsored
5 persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews and millions of
6 other individuals, including Polish, Roma, disabled, and homosexual
7 individuals by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.

8 Sec. 4. TRANSITION

9 Holocaust studies shall be included in public school curricula for the 2024–
10 2025 school year.

11 Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

12 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.