Chapter 092
2016 -- S 2396 SUBSTITUTE A
Enacted 06/17/2016

A N C T
RELATING TO EDUCATION - HOLOCAUST GENOCIDE EDUCATION

Introduced By: Senators Goldin, Miller, Raptakis, and Gallo
Date Introduced: February 11, 2016

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. The title of Chapter 16-93 of the General Laws entitled "Genocide Education in Secondary Schools" [see Title 16 Chapter 97 – The Rhode Island Board of Education Act] is hereby amended to read as follows:

CHAPTER 16-93
GENOCIDE EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS [See Title 16 Chapter 97 – The Rhode Island Board of Education Act]

CHAPTER 16-93
HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS [See Title 16 Chapter 97 – The Rhode Island Board of Education Act]

SECTION 2. Sections 16-93-1, 16-93-2 and 16-93-3 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-93 entitled "Genocide Education in Secondary Schools [See Title 16 Chapter 97 - The Rhode Island Board of Education Act]" are hereby amended to read as follows:

16-93-1. Legislative findings. -- The general assembly hereby finds and declares that:

(1) On November 4, 1988, the United States government ratified the International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide ("Genocide Convention") which was approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. Upon ratification, the United States government recognized that throughout all periods of history, genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity, and was convinced that, in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international co-operation was required.

(2) The United States government recognizes that genocide still continues, today, in the twenty-first (21st) century. The United States Congress passed House Con. Resolution 467, "Declaring genocide in Darfur, Sudan" on July 22, 2004. On September 9, 2004, the United States Secretary of State, Colin L. Powell, told the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee that "genocide has occurred and may still be occurring in Darfur." Additionally, President George W. Bush affirmed the Secretary of State’s finding on September 21, 2004, when he addressed the United Nations General Assembly by saying: "At this hour, the world is witnessing terrible suffering and horrible crimes in the Darfur region of Sudan, crimes my government has concluded are genocide."

(3) The United States Department of Education says "education is primarily a state and local responsibility in the United States. It is states and communities, as well as public and private organizations of all kinds, that establish schools and colleges and develop curricula ..."

(4) The state of Rhode Island also has previously demonstrated its concerns and interests regarding raising awareness on subject the subjects of holocaust and genocide.

(i) In 2000, the Rhode Island general assembly passed house bill no. 7397: "Genocide and Human Rights Education," requiring the Rhode Island department of education to "develop curricular material on genocide and human rights issues and guidelines for the teaching
of that material."

(ii) In 2007, the Rhode Island general assembly passed house bill No. 5142, requiring the state investment commission to divest its assets from targeted companies in Sudan.

(iii) In 2011, the state of Rhode Island enacted an act entitled "Genocide Education in Secondary Schools" (Chapters 45 and 70 of the Public Laws of 2011) which emphasized a need to adhere to making genocide curriculum materials available including, but not limited to, the Holocaust, Armenia, Cambodia, and Darfur.

(iv) The general assembly has passed a number of resolutions condemning the Holocaust.

(v) The general assembly, on the 100th commemoration of the Armenian mass killings, declared it a genocide. (Resolution No. 198 passed by the house of representatives at its January session A.D. 2015 and approved April 8, 2015, entitled "House Resolution Proclaiming April 24, 2015, as 'Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day' to Commemorate the Armenian Genocide of 1915 to 1923 and in Honor of Armenian-Americans" and Resolution No. 217 passed by the senate at its January session A.D. 2015 and approved April 15, 2015, entitled "Senate Resolution Proclaiming April 24, 2015, as 'Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day' to Commemorate the Armenian Genocide of 1915 to 1923 and in Honor of Armenian-Americans").

(vi) The governor, legislators, and community leaders attended and participated at the Holocaust memorial dedication in 2015 whereby a need was recognized for education on the topic of holocaust and genocide in Rhode Island schools.

(5) The establishment of free public education in the United States is intended to prepare citizens for participation in American social, economic, and political activities.

(6) The State of Rhode Island has also previously demonstrated its concerns for civic education, of which genocide education should be a component. In 2005, the general assembly directed the board of regents for elementary and secondary education to develop and adopt a set of grade level standards in civic education by August 31, 2007.

(7) Given the importance of the issue of genocide to the political affairs of the United States, as well as the responsibility of the state to educate its citizens, it is a fundamental responsibility of the State of Rhode Island to ensure that the critical subject of genocide is included as part of the curriculum in all public schools.

(8) It is the judgment of the Rhode Island general assembly to encourage that every board of education in the state shall include instruction on the subject of holocaust and genocide studies, where in an appropriate place in the curriculum, for all middle and high school students.

16-93-2. Definitions. -- For the purpose of this chapter, the following words shall have the following meanings:

(1) "Genocide," as defined by the Genocide Convention: "means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethничal, racial, or religious group, such as: (i) Killing members of the group; (ii) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (iii) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (iv) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and/or (v) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

(2) "Holocaust" means the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million (6,000,000) Jews and five million (5,000,000) other individuals by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.

16-93-3. Powers and duties. – The state shall adhere to the following procedures:
(1) The department of education shall collect and disseminate to every school district, private school, mayoral academy, and charter school, and make available on its website, curriculum materials and such other materials as may assist local and regional school committees and governing bodies of any private school, mayoral academy, or charter school, in developing instructional programs pursuant to this section materials on holocaust and genocide awareness and education. The curriculum materials may include information on relevant genocides, including the Holocaust, Armenia, Cambodia, Iraq, Rwanda, and Darfur.

(2) Every school district shall include in its curriculum a unit of instruction on holocaust and genocide, utilizing, but not being limited to, the materials collected and disseminated by the department of education, commencing with the 2017-2018 school year. Nothing herein shall require school districts to require holocaust and genocide instruction in every year of middle school and high school, but that holocaust and genocide education and instruction shall be utilized during appropriate times in the middle school and/or high school curricula, as determined by the local authority. All students should have received instruction on genocide and holocaust awareness materials by the time they have graduated from high school.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.