

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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115th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-1991

Legislative Document

No. 940

H.P. 661

House of Representatives, March 6, 1991

Received by the Clerk of the House on March 4, 1991. Referred to the Committee on Education and 1400 ordered printed pursuant to Joint Rule 14.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ed Pert".

EDWIN H. PERT, Clerk

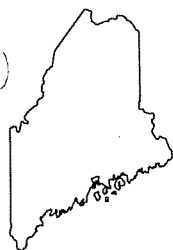
Presented by Representative FARNSWORTH of Hallowell.

Cosponsored by Senator CLARK of Cumberland, Senator BUSTIN of Kennebec and Representative HICHENS of Eliot.

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND NINETY-ONE

An Act to Increase the Availability of Sign Language Training.



Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

2
3 Sec. 1. 1 MRSA §132 is enacted to read:

4
5 §132. Deaf Culture Week

6
7 The Governor shall annually issue a proclamation setting
8 aside the last full week in September as Deaf Culture Week. The
9 proclamation must invite and urge the people of the State to
10 observe the week in schools and other suitable places with
11 appropriate ceremony and study. The Department of Education
12 shall make appropriate information available to the people and
13 the schools within its budget.

14
15 Sec. 2. 1 MRSA §219 is enacted to read:

16
17 §219. Official state language of the deaf community

18
19 American sign language is the official state language of the
20 deaf community.

21
22 Sec. 3. 20-A MRSA §4708 is enacted to read:

23
24 §4708. Sign language

25
26 A school administration unit shall offer an annual course of
27 instruction in sign language either as part of its secondary
28 school curriculum or as part of the curriculum in an adult
29 education course of instruction.

30
31 1. Course requirements. The course of instruction in sign
32 language must identify what type of signed communication is
33 offered and must be taught by a qualified instructor as
34 determined by the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf.

35
36 2. Exception. If the school administration unit determines
37 that the student enrollment in a course instruction in sign
38 language is insufficient in any year the course is offered, it
39 may withdraw that course from the curriculum.

40
41 Sec. 4. 20-A MRSA §4726, as amended by PL 1985, c. 178, is
42 further amended to read:

43
44 §4726. Foreign languages

45
46 Each school administrative unit:

47
48 1. Required to offer. Shall offer one 2-year sequence in a
49 foreign language; and

2 2. **Encouraged to offer.** Is encouraged to offer one or more
3 additional foreign languages as part of its secondary school
4 program; and .

5 ~~3. American sign language. May offer American sign~~
6 ~~language to fulfill the foreign language requirement under~~
7 ~~subsection 2.~~

8 American sign language is a foreign language and may be
9 offered to fulfill the requirements of this section.

10 **Sec. 5. 20-A MRSA §4805, sub-§8** is enacted to read:

11 8. Deaf Culture Week. Deaf Culture Week is the last full
12 week in September in accordance with Title 1, section 132.

13 **Sec. 6. 20-A MRSA §5204, sub-§6,** as amended by PL 1983, c.
14 859, Pt. C, §§6 and 7, is further amended to read:

15 **6. Insufficient courses; time limitations.** If the
16 secondary school does not offer 2 approved foreign language
17 courses, then its students may attend another secondary school
18 approved for tuition purposes to take the language courses
19 provided that:

20 A. The receiving school accepts tuition students;

21 B. The students meet the qualifications for attending their
22 own secondary school; and

23 C. The students have notified their own school
24 administrative unit by April 1st, before the start of each
25 school year, that they wish to take the foreign language not
26 being offered by their school administrative unit. Their
27 school administrative unit shall notify them on or before
28 July 15th of that year when the language course will be
29 offered in the next school year.

30 American sign language is a foreign language and may be the basis
31 for students attending another secondary school for purposes of
32 this subsection.

33 **Sec. 7. 20-A MRSA §10711** is enacted to read:

34 §10711. American sign language

35 A postsecondary degree-granting educational institution
36 shall recognize American sign language as a foreign language for
37 the purposes of:

2 1. Entrance requirements. Meeting a foreign language
3 requirement for entering students if the educational institution
4 has such an entrance requirement; and

5 2. Offering courses. Offering courses in foreign languages
6 for academic credit if the educational institution offers foreign
7 language courses.

10
11
12 **STATEMENT OF FACT**

13 The purpose of this bill is to improve the availability of
14 and access to qualified interpreters for the deaf to ensure
15 effective communication between deaf and hearing people. To
16 accomplish this purpose the bill:

17 1. Designates American sign language as the official state
18 language of the deaf community;

19 2. Requires school administration units to offer at least
20 annually a course of instruction in signed communication in their
21 secondary schools or as part of adult education programs;

22 3. Requires that, since people who communicate in both
23 American sign language and English are truly bilingual, American
24 sign language be considered a foreign language for courses of
25 instruction in foreign languages in secondary schools and for
26 entrance requirements and course offerings for academic credit in
27 postsecondary degree-granting educational institutions; and
28

29 4. Establishes Deaf Culture Week, which is the last full
30 week in September, as a commemorative week and special school
31 observance.
32
33
34