

2021 -- H 5650

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE  
EDUCATION COMMISSION

Introduced By: Representatives Kislak, Kazarian, Blazejewski, Biah, Williams, Henries,  
Knight, Ackerman, Ranglin-Vassell, and Ajello

Date Introduced: February 23, 2021

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Legislative Findings.

2 The general assembly finds and declares that:

3 (1) In 2000, the Rhode Island general assembly passed, and the governor signed into law,  
4 00 H 7397 "Genocide and human rights education," requiring the Rhode Island department of  
5 education to "develop curricular material on genocide and human rights issues and guidelines for  
6 the teaching of that material".

7 (2) In 2011, the state of Rhode Island passed into law "Genocide Education in Secondary  
8 Schools" (P.L. 2011, ch. 45, § 1; P.L. 2011, ch. 70, § 1) which emphasized a need to adhere to  
9 making genocide curriculum materials available including, but not limited to, the Holocaust,  
10 Armenia, Cambodia, and Darfur.

11 (3) In 2016, the Rhode Island general assembly passed, and the governor signed into law,  
12 16 H 7488 SUBSTITUTE A and 16 S 2396 SUBSTITUTE A to require that the Holocaust and  
13 genocide be taught in public middle and high schools.

14 (4) Throughout the years, the general assembly has consistently passed resolutions  
15 condemning the Holocaust and genocides. Since the passage of the legislation into law, to require  
16 Holocaust and genocide education in its schools, the general assembly has recognized its  
17 importance by honoring its passage with continued resolutions of its observance.

18 (5) The governor, legislators, and community leaders have always made it a priority to

1 attend and participate in Holocaust and genocide memorial and other related events to emphasize  
2 the continued need to recognize the horrible tragedies and atrocities committed to ancestors of the  
3 Rhode Island state community members.

4 SECTION 2. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended by  
5 adding thereto the following chapter:

6 CHAPTER 93.1

7 THE RHODE ISLAND HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE EDUCATION COMMISSION [SEE  
8 TITLE 16 CHAPTER 97 - THE RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION ACT]

9 **16-93.1-1. Short title.**

10 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "The Rhode Island Holocaust and  
11 Genocide Education Commission".

12 **16-93.1-2. Definitions.**

13 As used in this chapter, the following words and terms shall have the following meanings  
14 unless the context shall clearly indicate another or different meaning or intent:

15 (1) "Genocide" means any act committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in substantial  
16 part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group such as:

17 (i) Killing members of that group;

18 (ii) Causing serious bodily injury to members of that group;

19 (iii) Causing permanent impairment of the mental faculties of members of the group  
20 through drugs, torture or similar techniques;

21 (iv) Subjecting the group to conditions of life that are intended to cause the physical  
22 destruction of the group in whole or in part;

23 (v) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; or

24 (vi) Forcibly transferring or attempting to transfer children of the group to another group,  
25 as defined by the Genocide Convention Implementation Act of 1987 (18 USC 1091).

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

29 **16-93.1-3. Holocaust and genocide education commission.**

30 (a) There is hereby created a permanent commission to be known as the Rhode Island  
31 Holocaust and genocide education commission to consist of fifteen (15) members; two (2) of whom  
32 shall be from the house of representatives, with one member from each political party, to be  
33 appointed by the governor after consultation with the speaker of the house; two (2) of whom shall  
34 be from the senate, with one member from each political party, to be appointed by the governor

1 after consultation with the senate president; eight (8) of whom shall be appointed by the governor  
2 to serve a term of three (3) years, at least three (3) of whom shall be involved in Holocaust and  
3 genocide education or have a personal connection or experience with the Holocaust or genocide; at  
4 least three (3) of whom shall have expertise in investigating, analyzing, or researching the  
5 Holocaust or genocide; three (3) nonvoting ex officio members, comprised of any combination of  
6 the following individuals, to serve until the ex officio member ceases to hold the applicable position  
7 as follows:

8 (1) A superintendent of schools duly certified pursuant to §16-2-10 and employed in any  
9 city or town;

10 (2) The Rhode Island postsecondary commissioner;

11 (3) A member of the Rhode Island Association of School Principals;

12 (4) A member of the Rhode Island Association of School Principals.

13 (b)(i) Appointed representatives may delegate to a responsible person knowledgeable in  
14 the Holocaust and genocide education to attend meetings and vote in place of the representative.  
15 The designee will be responsible for keeping the representative informed of details of the meetings  
16 and other commission details.

17 (ii) Appointed senators may delegate to a responsible person knowledgeable in the  
18 Holocaust and genocide education to attend meetings and vote in place of the senator. The designee  
19 will be responsible for keeping the senator informed of details of the meetings and other  
20 commission details.

21 (iii) Ex officio members may appoint a responsible individual from their organization to  
22 attend meetings. The designee will be responsible for keeping the ex officio member informed of  
23 details of the meetings and other commission details.

24 (c) A member of the commission may be removed by the governor for inefficiency, neglect  
25 of duty, misconduct, or malfeasance in office, after being given a written statement of the charges  
26 and an opportunity to be publicly heard on such charges by the general assembly.

27 (d) Vacancies in the commission shall be filled in the manner provided under subsection  
28 (a) of this section. Any member appointed to fill a vacancy occurring prior to the expiration of the  
29 term for which the member's predecessor was appointed shall hold office for the remainder of that  
30 term. Any appointed member shall continue in office subsequent to the expiration of that member's  
31 term until the member's successor takes office or until a period of sixty (60) days has elapsed,  
32 whichever occurs first.

33 **16-93.1-4. Meetings and by-laws.**

34 (a) The commission shall meet at least six (6) times during a calendar year.

1 (b) At the first meeting, the commission shall elect a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, and  
2 other officers from the voting members.

3 (c) The commission shall adopt by-laws governing the commission.

4 **16-93.1-5. Quorum.**

5 A quorum at the meeting shall consist of eight (8) voting members present. No action of  
6 the commission shall be taken without the affirmative vote of eight (8) voting members.

7 **16-93.1-6. Expenses.**

8 Members of the commission shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for  
9 expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

10 **16-93.1-7. Duties and responsibilities of the commission.**

11 The commission shall:

12 (1) Gather and disseminate Holocaust and genocide information throughout this state;

13 (2) Take inventory of current statewide Holocaust and genocide memorial and education  
14 programs and initiatives, and partner with the department of elementary and secondary education  
15 to prepare a comprehensive educational program to fill program and initiative gaps;

16 (3) Promote public awareness of issues relating to the Holocaust and genocide education  
17 through public education programs;

18 (4) Advise and educate the governor, general assembly, and state departments and agencies  
19 regarding the nature, magnitude and priorities of Holocaust and genocide memorial education, and  
20 develop policies and programs to address those needs;

21 (5) Seek opportunities to provide resources for schools to effectively teach about the  
22 Holocaust and genocide;

23 (6) Review and approve grants that are administered or subcontracted by the commission;  
24 and

25 (7) Submit a written annual report of the commission's activities, accomplishments, and  
26 recommendations to the governor, the president of the senate, the speaker of the house of  
27 representatives, and the representatives and senators appointed pursuant to §16-93.1-3.

28 **16-93.1-8. Holocaust and genocide memorial and education office.**

29 (a) There is hereby created the Holocaust and genocide memorial and education office to  
30 serve the commission.

31 (b) The director of the Holocaust and genocide memorial and education office shall be  
32 appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of, the commission. The director shall, with the  
33 commission's approval, appoint employees as necessary to carry out the duties of the office. The  
34 employees shall serve at the director's pleasure.

1           **16-93.1-9. Duties and responsibilities of the office.**

2           The Holocaust and genocide memorial and education office shall do the following:

3           (1) Advise and provide information to the commission on statewide programs and new  
4 opportunities to further Holocaust and genocide memorial and education;

5           (2) Serve as a clearinghouse to review, comment on, and propose initiatives submitted to  
6 the office that meet Holocaust and genocide memorial and education needs;

7           (3) Apply for and accept grants and gifts from public and private sources to be administered  
8 by the office or subcontracted to local public or nonprofit agencies that shall use the grants and  
9 gifts for the purpose intended;

10          (4) Monitor and evaluate all programs subcontracted to local public or nonprofit agencies  
11 and ensure that any grants or gifts are being used for the purpose intended;

12          (5) Endeavor to ensure that Holocaust and genocide survivors, liberators, educators, and  
13 others involved in Holocaust and genocide education and memorial have access to decision-making  
14 bodies in local, state, national, and international departments, agencies, and genocide education and  
15 memorial organizations;

16          (6)(i) Establish advisory committees for special subjects, as needed, to facilitate and  
17 maximize community participation and subject matter expertise in the operation of the commission;

18          (ii) Advisory committees shall be comprised of members representing community  
19 organizations, charitable institutions, elementary and secondary schools, higher education  
20 institutions, faith-based organizations, public officials, and other persons as determined by the  
21 office;

22          (7) Establish relationships with local and state governments, federal officials, nonprofit  
23 organizations, and the private sector to promote and ensure the highest standards of Holocaust and  
24 genocide memorial and education; and

25          (8) Prepare a written annual report of the commission's activities, accomplishments, and  
26 recommendations to the commission for the commission's submittal to the governor, the president  
27 of the senate, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the representatives and senators  
28 appointed pursuant to §16-93.1-3.

29          SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE  
EDUCATION COMMISSION

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1           This act would create the Holocaust and genocide education commission to:

2           (1) Gather and disseminate Holocaust and genocide information;

3           (2) Review current statewide Holocaust and genocide memorial and education programs  
4 and initiatives, and partner with the state department of elementary and secondary education to  
5 prepare a program;

6           (3) Promote public awareness of issues relating to Holocaust and genocide education;

7           (4) Advise and educate the governor, general assembly, and state departments and agencies  
8 regarding the nature, magnitude and priorities of Holocaust and genocide memorial education, and  
9 develop policies and programs to address those needs; and

10          (5) Seek opportunities to provide resources for schools to effectively teach about the  
11 Holocaust and genocide.

12          This act would take effect upon passage.

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