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HOUSE BILL NO. 591

INTRODUCED BY G. OBLANDER, S. KLAKKEN, E. ALBUS, A. NICASTRO, T. SHARP, C. COCHRAN, E. TILLEMANN, C. SPRUNGER, S. FITZPATRICK, C. GLIMM, B. LER, J. ETCHART, B. BARKER, L. BREWSTER, N. DURAM, T. FALK, G. HERTZ, G. KMETZ, T. MCGILLVRAV, G. NIKOLAKAKOS, J. TREBAS, Z. WIRTH, J. HINKLE, J. DARLING

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT INSTITUTING THE CELEBRATE FREEDOM WEEK IN MONTANA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS; PROVIDING THAT AT LEAST 3 HOURS OF INSTRUCTION ABOUT THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION, AND THE MONTANA CONSTITUTION BE PROVIDED DURING CELEBRATE FREEDOM WEEK; REQUIRING SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO ENSURE THAT PUPILS IN GRADES 3 THROUGH 12 RECITE A CERTAIN PASSAGE FROM THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; PROVIDING EXCEPTIONS FOR PARENTAL REQUESTS, FOR CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTIONS, OR FOR CHILDREN OF CERTAIN FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. Section 1. Celebrate freedom week. (1) To educate students about the sacrifices made for freedom in the founding of the United States and the values on which the United States was founded, the last full week of classes in September must be recognized in public schools as celebrate freedom week.

(2) (a) Celebrate freedom week must include at least 3 hours of instruction in each social studies class regarding the topics provided in subsections (2)(b) and (2)(c), as determined by the trustees of a school district.

(b) The celebrate freedom week instruction must include an in-depth study of the intent, meaning, and importance of the Declaration of Independence, the United States constitution, including the bill of rights, and the Montana constitution in their historical context.

(c) The study of the Declaration of Independence must include the relationship of the ideas expressed in the declaration to subsequent American history, including the relationship of the declaration's

1 ideas to:

- 2 (i) the rich diversity of our people as a nation of immigrants;
- 3 (ii) the American revolution;
- 4 (iii) the formulation of the United States constitution; and
- 5 (iv) the abolitionist movement, which led to the emancipation proclamation and the women's
- 6 suffrage movement.

7 (3) During celebrate freedom week, the trustees of a school district shall ensure that all pupils in
8 grades 3 through 12 recite the following text at the beginning of each school day:

9 "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their
10 creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness --that to
11 secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the
12 governed."

13 (4) A school district shall excuse a student from the recitation required in subsection (3) on written
14 request from a student's parent or guardian. The provisions of subsection (3) do not apply to a student who:

- 15 (a) has a conscientious objection to the recitation; or
- 16 (b) is the child of a representative of a foreign government to whom the United States government
- 17 extends diplomatic immunity.

18
19 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Codification instruction.** [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an
20 integral part of Title 20, chapter 7, part 1, and the provisions of Title 20, chapter 7, part 1, apply to [section 1].

21
22 **NEW SECTION. Section 3. Effective date.** [This act] is effective July 1, 2025.

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