

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

## **An Act To Require the Teaching of Agricultural Studies in Maine's Schools**

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

**Sec. 1. 7 MRSA §242, sub-§2,** as enacted by PL 2007, c. 456, §2, is amended to read:

**2. Purpose.** The purpose of the council is to promote an understanding of the food and fiber system in the State and the nation through the infusion of agricultural concepts into primary, secondary and postsecondary curricula. The council shall help prepare for the inclusion of agricultural concepts into the required course in agricultural studies as specified in Title 20-A, section 4706, subsection 3. For the purposes of this section and Title 20-A, section 4706, subsection 3, "agricultural concepts" includes, but is not limited to:

- A. The importance of agriculture in the State and in the nation's history and development;
- B. The connections between geography, climate and agriculture;
- C. The relationship between technology and agricultural success and development;
- D. The economics of agriculture;
- E. The global aspects of agriculture; and
- F. The relationship of the food and fiber system to public policy issues.

**Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §4706,** as amended by PL 2003, c. 510, Pt. B, §5, is further amended to read:

### **§ 4706. Instruction in American history, Maine studies, Maine Native American history and agricultural studies**

American history ~~and~~, Maine studies and agricultural studies must be taught as specified in the system of learning results established in section 6209.

**1. American history.** American history and civil government, including the Constitution of the United States, the Declaration of Independence, the importance of voting and the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship, must be taught in and required for graduation from all elementary and secondary schools, both public and private.

**2. Maine studies.** Maine history, including the Constitution of Maine, Maine geography and environment and the natural, industrial and economic resources of Maine and Maine's cultural and ethnic heritage, must be taught. A required component of Maine studies is Maine Native American studies, which must be included in the review of content standards and performance indicators of the learning results conducted in accordance with section 6209, subsection 4. The Maine Native American studies must address the following topics:

- A. Maine tribal governments and political systems and their relationship with local, state, national and international governments;
- B. Maine Native American cultural systems and the experience of Maine tribal people throughout history;
- C. Maine Native American territories; and
- D. Maine Native American economic systems.

**3. Agricultural studies.** Agricultural concepts as described in Title 7, section 242, subsection 2 must be taught and included in the review of content standards and performance indicators of the system of learning results conducted in accordance with section 6209, subsection 4.

**Sec. 3. Recommendations for the inclusion of agricultural studies to the system of learning results.** The Maine Agriculture in the Classroom Council, as established in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 7, section 242, and the Department of Education shall develop recommendations for instruction of agricultural studies to be included in the system of learning results established in Title 20-A, section 6209.

**Sec. 4. Report.** The Maine Agriculture in the Classroom Council and the Department of Education shall report their recommendations developed pursuant to section 3 to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry no later than January 15, 2010.

**Sec. 5. Report must include plan to assist school administrative units.** The recommendations under section 4 must include provisions for assistance to the Department of Education in helping school administrative units implement instruction in agricultural studies. The recommendations must also include criteria to identify school administrative units having difficulty meeting the instructional requirements of agricultural studies and the provision for assistance to these school administrative units. The recommendations for assistance must be established by July 30, 2012 and implemented during the 2012-2013 school year.

**Sec. 6. Implementation of agricultural studies subject to availability of funds.** Notwithstanding the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 4706, subsection 3, a school administrative unit is not required to take any action that necessitates additional expenditures from local revenues unless the Department of Education pays for 90% of the additional costs. Implementation of instruction in agricultural studies is at the discretion of the school administrative unit if additional local expenditures are required for implementation and the department has not paid its share of the additional local costs.

A school administrative unit that determines that it is unable to implement instruction in agricultural studies within existing state and local resources shall present its findings and supporting evidence to the Department of Education. The department shall review the school administrative unit's findings and evidence and, if necessary, assist the school administrative unit in planning for implementation.

**Sec. 7. Effective date.** Those sections of this Act that amend the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 7, section 242, subsection 2 and Title 20-A, section 4706 take effect September 1, 2012.

## SUMMARY

This bill is the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry pursuant to Public Law 2007, chapter 660, section 18 and requires that agricultural studies be included in the system of learning results. The bill also provides that the Maine Agriculture in the Classroom Council and the Department of Education develop a plan for instruction of agricultural studies to be included in the system of learning results and present the plan to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry no later than January 15, 2010. The bill requires that the plan must include assistance to the Department of Education in helping school administrative units to implement instruction in agricultural concepts. The plan for assistance must be established by July 30, 2012 and implemented during the 2012-2013 school year.

The bill also allows a school administrative unit not to implement instruction of agricultural studies if implementation cannot be achieved within existing local resources.