



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #633

Tribal Language Grants (DPI -- Categorical Aids)

[LFB 2009-11 Budget Summary: Page 525, #5]

CURRENT LAW

No provision.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$247,500 PR annually in a new appropriation for tribal language revitalization grants to school districts and cooperative educational service agencies (CESAs). The funding source is program revenue from tribal gaming revenues transferred from the Department of Administration. Allow a district or CESA, in conjunction with a tribal education authority, to apply to DPI for a grant for the purpose of supporting innovative, effective instruction in one or more American Indian languages. Require DPI to promulgate rules to implement and administer the program.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. In its agency budget request, DPI requested funding for a competitive grant program to support school-based instructional programs in tribal languages. DPI proposed awards that would range from \$10,000 to \$50,000. Grants in the lower range could be used for curriculum design, creation of assessment instruments, training in instruction methods, community engagement, and program evaluation. Grants at the higher range, in DPI's proposal, could be used to hire specialized personnel to supplement school teaching staff.

2. The proposal addresses the concern that tribal languages are in danger of extinction. An estimated 0.5% of the membership of the tribal nations in Wisconsin, many from older generations, are fluent speakers in one of six tribal languages. Each of the 11 tribes in the state

operates a program designed to revitalize their language. The programs are typically funded through a combination of private grants, tribal funds, and federal funding and are community-based, as opposed to school-based.

3. Proponents argue that traditional language and culture instruction has a positive effect on American Indian students' academic achievement in other areas. School-based tribal language programs ensure that school culture does not conflict with pupils' tribal culture, and can have positive effects including enhanced self-esteem and increased community engagement, as well as the cognitive flexibility developed by many bilingual children.

4. In Wisconsin, results from the knowledge and concepts examinations show significant achievement gaps between American Indian pupils and other pupils in the state, with American Indians falling further the longer they are in school. For example, 73% of 4th grade American Indian pupils are proficient or advanced in reading, compared to 82% of all pupils in the state, for a 9 point gap. The gap in 4th grade mathematics is 12 points. However, by 10th grade, the gap in reading is 13 points, and for mathematics, 20 points. Longitudinal data prepared by DPI, comparing the fourth, eighth, and tenth grade exams taken by the class of 2007, noted similar trends. Some research suggests that teaching tribal languages can improve academic engagement and achievement by American Indian pupils.

5. On the other hand, expending tribal gaming revenue has the same effect on the state's general fund as using GPR funding. Tribal gaming payments to the state fund programs in various state agencies, and any remaining moneys are deposited in the general fund. General fund revenue from tribal gaming is identified in the state's general fund condition statement and is estimated in each fiscal year based on projected tribal payments to the state, less any amounts appropriated to state agencies. Given that the 11 tribes currently operate language programs with other funding sources, the Committee could choose to delete this provision in order to improve general fund revenues.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide \$247,500 annually in a new appropriation for tribal language revitalization grants to school districts and cooperative educational service agencies (CESAs).

2. Delete provision.

ALT 2	Change to Bill	
	Revenue	Funding
GPR	\$495,000	
PR		-\$495,000

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