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EDUCATION

HOUSE FILE 304
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Passed House, Date _____ Passed Senate, Date _____
Vote: Ayes _____ Nays _____ Vote: Ayes _____ Nays _____
Approved _____

A BILL FOR

1 An Act establishing a state environmental education program and
2 making appropriations.
3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

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HF 304

1 Section 1. NEW SECTION. 258B.1 STATEWIDE ENVIRONMENTAL
2 EDUCATION STRATEGY.

3 1. It is in the interest of the citizens of Iowa that a
4 comprehensive environmental education initiative be undertaken
5 that will result in environmentally literate and responsible
6 citizens who will effectively and constructively solve
7 existing environmental problems, prevent new environmental
8 problems, and maintain a sustainable environment for future
9 Iowans. A healthy economy is intimately linked to a healthy
10 environment. The appropriate audiences for environmental
11 education include both formal and nonformal audiences,
12 business, labor, governments, nonprofit entities, and
13 citizens.

14 2. The goal of this initiative is to assure that Iowans
15 are environmentally literate. An environmentally literate
16 citizen is committed to lifelong learning and understands the
17 following:

18 a. Basic principles of ecology, sociology, and economics.

19 b. The interconnection of all parts of the environment.

20 c. The environmental and social costs and benefits of
21 consumer decisions.

22 d. Sources of energy, the improving of energy efficiency,
23 and the relationships between energy use and lifestyle.

24 e. The implications of economic and population trends.

25 f. The impacts of personal life styles and personal
26 choices.

27 g. The importance of acting in a sustainable and
28 constructive manner to protect the quality and diversity of
29 the natural world.

30 3. An office of environmental education, an interagency
31 environmental education committee, state and county
32 environmental education plans, preschool-to-adult
33 environmental education programs, environmental education
34 assistance, and a grants program shall be established to
35 achieve the goal of accomplishing this initiative. For

1 purposes of this chapter, "nonformal education" means
2 education which takes place outside of the formal, educational
3 classroom setting.

4 Sec. 2. NEW SECTION. 258B.2 OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL
5 EDUCATION.

6 1. An office of environmental education is established and
7 administratively attached to the department of education. The
8 full-time supervisor of the office shall be an experienced
9 environmental educator. The office shall be staffed by
10 appropriately trained personnel.

11 2. The office of environmental education shall do all of
12 the following:

13 a. Develop and publish a plan for environmental education
14 with assistance from the interagency environmental education
15 committee.

16 b. Accept, review, and approve county plans for
17 environmental education and administer the allocation of funds
18 to the county conservation boards provided for under section
19 258B.5.

20 c. Assess the status of environmental literacy of the
21 state's students, teachers, and citizens every four years.

22 d. Review the state's plan for environmental education
23 every four years with the assistance of the interagency
24 environmental education committee, revise the plan as needed,
25 and transmit the plan to the governor and the general
26 assembly.

27 e. Establish guidelines and specific criteria for the
28 grants program provided for in section 258B.4.

29 f. Administer the environmental education grants program.

30 g. Promote and aid in the establishment and evaluation of
31 school environmental education programs for preschool through
32 grade twelve.

33 h. Promote the development of environmental education
34 initiatives and programs for the adult population.

35 i. Cooperate with federal and state agencies and the

1 private sector in developing, promoting, and evaluating
2 environmental education programs.

3 j. Promote the development of cooperative environmental
4 education initiatives with the private sector.

5 k. Facilitate and encourage formal and nonformal
6 environmental education programs; facilitate, encourage, and
7 support multi-school districts' cooperative efforts to assess
8 the need for, develop, and evaluate environmental education
9 curricula, promote state government and private sector policy
10 that is consistent with the environmental education plan
11 established in this legislation, and assist in the
12 coordination of formal and nonformal environmental education
13 with the kindergarten through grade twelve and postsecondary
14 environmental education programs.

15 l. Initiate research on environmental education as called
16 for in the environmental education plan by issuing contracts
17 to organizations, colleges, universities, and other research-
18 based institutions.

19 m. Coordinate environmental education conferences to
20 assist in the dissemination, development, and achievement of
21 the state's environmental education plan.

22 Sec. 3. NEW SECTION. 258B.3 INTERAGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL
23 EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

24 1. An interagency environmental education committee is
25 established. The committee shall be composed of individuals
26 with knowledge in environmental education and the members
27 shall be employees appointed by each agency head. These
28 agencies may include, but are not necessarily limited to, the
29 departments of agriculture and land stewardship, cultural
30 affairs, education, economic development, human services,
31 natural resources, public health, and transportation, the
32 state board of regents, and the attorney general's office.
33 The chair shall be elected by the members.

34 2. Members of the committee shall serve as environmental
35 education coordinators for their respective agencies. They

1 shall direct an assessment of their own agency's target
2 audiences and develop appropriate programs to educate these
3 audiences regarding environmental issues. The committee shall
4 establish subcommittees as needed and assist with the
5 development and implementation of the state's environmental
6 education plan.

7 3. The committee shall develop and maintain a memorandum
8 of understanding to specify methods by which the agencies can
9 share their resources to benefit environmental education in
10 the state.

11 4. The committee shall promote networking, coordination,
12 and cooperation among state agencies, promote the efficient
13 distribution of information, and facilitate the planning and
14 development of educational programs and materials. The
15 department of education is responsible for convening and
16 facilitating the functions of the committee.

17 5. Members of the committee are not eligible to receive
18 any separate compensation and are not eligible for
19 reimbursement of expenses from the committee.

20 Sec. 4. NEW SECTION. 258B.4 GRANTS PROGRAM.

21 An environmental education grants program is established in
22 order to accomplish the goals set forth in section 258B.1.
23 Guidelines established by the office of environmental
24 education shall include, but are not limited to, a requirement
25 that grant proposals conform with county and state
26 environmental education plans. The department of education
27 shall administer the environmental education grant program. A
28 grant proposal affecting a single county shall be submitted to
29 and receive the approval of that county's environmental
30 education committee prior to submission to the department of
31 education. A grant proposal affecting more than one county or
32 the entire state shall be submitted directly to the department
33 of education.

34 Sec. 5. NEW SECTION. 258B.5 ASSISTANCE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
35 EDUCATION -- APPROPRIATION.

1 1. Financial assistance shall be administered by the
2 office of environmental education of the department of
3 education, and shall be provided to county conservation boards
4 to support the hiring of professional environmental educators
5 to assist schools and nonformal education sectors in planning
6 and leading environmental education programs. The financial
7 assistance shall be used to provide staff and equipment for
8 these programs and shall not be used for the construction or
9 maintenance of parks, buildings, or other physical facilities.
10 The financial assistance shall not replace existing county
11 moneys budgeted for environmental education. Financial
12 assistance shall be provided as follows:

13 a. Within thirty days of receipt of a county conservation
14 board's environmental education plan, pursuant to subsection
15 2, the sum of ten thousand one hundred dollars shall be
16 allocated to the county conservation board for use in
17 implementing the board's environmental education plan. One
18 million one hundred thousand dollars shall be divided among
19 eligible counties on a population-based formula detailed in
20 paragraphs "b" through "d".

21 b. A county shall be declared eligible if the county
22 submits certification that the county will do both of the
23 following:

24 (1) Provide county funding or support equivalent to one
25 cent per thousand dollars of the assessed value of taxable
26 property in the county or thirty-five thousand dollars,
27 whichever is less, according to a formula outlined in
28 paragraph "c", for environmental education.

29 (2) Explain how the financial assistance will be spent for
30 environmental education.

31 c. In order to meet county funding or support
32 requirements, county conservation boards may include the
33 dollar equivalent of the following county support:

34 (1) Salaries and benefits for all full-time and part-time
35 naturalists, environmental education coordinators,

1 environmental program specialists, and other positions whose
2 responsibilities lie solely within the county conservation
3 board's environmental education program.

4 (2) For staff positions involving some responsibilities
5 outside the environmental education program, such as a ranger,
6 a percentage of the salary and benefits equal to that portion
7 of time devoted specifically to the environmental education
8 program.

9 (3) Operation and maintenance, but not purchase, of a
10 county vehicle designated to be used specifically by the
11 environmental education program staff.

12 (4) Funds budgeted specifically for the environmental
13 education program, including, but not limited to: program
14 supplies, office supplies, telephone and communications,
15 uniforms, newsletters and other public relations tools,
16 publicity, library and resource materials, printing or
17 purchase of environmental and conservation education resource
18 materials, travel, and professional development workshops and
19 conferences.

20 The costs of construction or maintenance of parks,
21 buildings, or any physical facilities shall not be used to
22 meet the county funding or support requirements.

23 d. Counties declared eligible shall receive financial
24 assistance under this section according to the following
25 formula: official population figure of the county according
26 to the most recent federal decennial census times forty cents.

27 e. In order to fulfill the county funding or support
28 requirements of this section, county conservation boards may
29 contract with private nature centers, camps, or other private
30 or public entities to provide these environmental education
31 services. The boards shall submit an annual report to the
32 office of environmental education demonstrating and certifying
33 the proper use of these funds.

34 f. The focus of this financial assistance shall be, but is
35 not limited to: helping teachers, group leaders, and other

1 environmental educators to plan, develop, and implement
2 environmental education programs, including leading outdoor
3 environmental education classes for all ages and for both
4 formal and nonformal educational groups; providing program
5 resources such as environmental education activity guides and
6 curricula, learning kits, audiovisual materials, literature,
7 and equipment; and interpreting Iowa's natural and cultural
8 resources and how to use them wisely.

9 2. To receive funds under this section, a county shall
10 establish a county environmental education committee. The
11 county conservation board shall be responsible for the
12 establishment and membership of the committee. Members shall
13 include, but are not limited to, representatives from soil and
14 water conservation districts, local schools, conservation
15 groups, and business and industry groups with established
16 interests in environmental education. Responsibilities of the
17 committee shall include, but are not limited to, the
18 following:

19 a. Establishing operating rules for the committee.

20 b. Developing and submitting to the county conservation
21 board annual eligibility reports.

22 c. Developing and submitting the county environmental
23 education plan to the office of environmental education. The
24 plan shall include, but is not limited to, all of the
25 following:

26 (1) Long-term goals for environmental education in the
27 county and an outline of the relationship of the plan to the
28 goal of achieving environmental literacy.

29 (2) A description of the manner in which the plan utilizes
30 existing professional environmental education personnel,
31 programs, and facilities.

32 (3) An outline of the resources needed to achieve plan
33 goals, including sufficient professional educators to meet a
34 target of one full-time equivalent environmental educator for
35 every three thousand to four thousand kindergarten through

1 grade twelve students in the county.

2 (4) Letters of support for the plan from the members of
3 the county environmental education committee.

4 The plan shall be reviewed and accordingly revised every
5 four years in coordination with a state assessment of
6 environmental literacy provided for in section 258B.2.

7 d. Facilitating communication among all parties active in
8 environmental education in the county to maximize the use of
9 local resources.

10 e. Reviewing and commenting on grants proposals submitted
11 to the office of environmental education pursuant to section
12 258B.4.

13 3. There is appropriated from the general fund of the
14 state to the department of education for each fiscal year the
15 sum of one million dollars for the purpose of providing
16 financial assistance for environmental education as provided
17 in subsection 1.

18 Sec. 6. NEW SECTION. 258B.6 RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL
19 EDUCATION PROGRAMS -- APPROPRIATION.

20 1. A residential environmental education program is
21 created to recognize the critical role that both direct
22 experience with the outdoors and a several-day residential
23 experience away from the home and formal school environment
24 play in the formation of an environmentally literate
25 citizenry.

26 2. Phase I of the program shall provide supplemental
27 funding of thirty-five dollars per pupil to school districts
28 that choose to provide for the attendance of the pupils in one
29 grade level at a certified residential environmental education
30 center. To receive this funding, school districts must
31 provide proof of attendance by their pupils at such a center
32 and participation by pupils in a certified program for a
33 minimum of two consecutive days for each pupil. In addition,
34 school districts shall submit evidence of matching
35 contributions of at least fifty percent of the total program

1 cost. Local school districts shall choose the grade level and
2 the time of year they feel is most developmentally appropriate
3 for this residential experience.

4 3. Phase II of the program shall consist of all of the
5 following:

6 a. Development of certification criteria for facilities,
7 staff, and programs.

8 b. Census of existing facilities, staff, and programs
9 relative to the certification criteria.

10 c. Assessment of the needs of these facilities.

11 4. The program shall be administered by the office of
12 environmental education.

13 5. There is appropriated from the general fund of the
14 state to the department of education for each fiscal year, the
15 sum of three hundred fifty thousand dollars for the purposes
16 of phase I of the residential environmental education program
17 as provided in subsection 2.

18 Sec. 7. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. There is appropriated
19 from the general fund of the state to the department of
20 education for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1997, and
21 ending June 30, 1998, the following amount, or so much thereof
22 as is necessary, to be used for the purpose designated:

23 OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

24 For salaries, support, maintenance, miscellaneous purposes,
25 and for not more than the following full-time equivalent
26 positions:

27	\$	600,000
28	FTE	2.00

29 EXPLANATION

30 This bill establishes an environmental education strategy
31 for the state of Iowa. The bill also establishes and funds a
32 state office of environmental education for all of Iowa's
33 citizens from preschoolers to adults. The office is
34 administratively attached to the department of education to
35 establish and coordinate a plan for the state. The office is

1 to coordinate with federal and state agencies and the private
2 sector in developing and implementing environmental education
3 strategies. The bill appropriates \$600,000 from the general
4 fund to fund the office for the fiscal year beginning July 1,
5 1997. A grants program is also established to be administered
6 by the department of education.

7 An interagency environmental education committee is
8 established to coordinate efforts among state agencies to
9 promote and assist in providing environmental education
10 programs in the state.

11 An assistance program is established and the bill creates a
12 \$1 million standing appropriation to provide assistance for
13 county conservation boards. The bill provides a formula for
14 determining the eligibility of each county board.

15 The bill also appropriates \$350,000 to reimburse a school
16 district on a per pupil basis when the school district permits
17 pupils from one grade level to spend two or more consecutive
18 days at a certified residential environmental education
19 center.

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