

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

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**Gov. Blagojevich signs law expanding
genocide education in Illinois**

*Studies will now include recent atrocities in
Armenia, Ukraine, Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Sudan*

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today signed House Bill (HB) 312 into law, expanding Holocaust and genocide education for Illinois elementary and high school students. In addition to learning about the Nazi atrocities of the 20th century, students will now learn about more recent acts of genocide around the world, including those in Armenia, Ukraine, Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Sudan. In June, the governor signed legislation making Illinois the first state in the nation to end state investment in Sudan, cutting all state financial ties with the oppressive and genocidal Sudanese government.

“As we teach our kids the important lessons of history, we have to be sure that they understand that racial, national, ethnic and religious hatred can lead to horrible tragedies,” said Gov. Blagojevich. “Sadly, these are not just the problems of our parents’ or grandparents’ generations. We have to make sure our schools teach the importance of embracing differences among people and encourage students to fight intolerance and hatred wherever they see it.”

Sponsored by Rep. John Fritchey (D-Chicago) and Sen. Jacqueline Collins (D-Chicago), HB 312 expands the previous requirement for Illinois public elementary schools and high schools to teach a unit on genocide focused on the events of the Nazi Holocaust of 1933 to 1945. The new unit of instruction required by HB 312 will include, but is not limited to: the Armenian Genocide; the Famine-Genocide in Ukraine; and more recent atrocities in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Sudan.

“In light of the culturally diverse population in Illinois and our increasingly global society, we must ensure that the tragedy of the Holocaust is not painted with an isolated

brush,” stated the bill’s chief sponsor, Rep. John Fritchey (D-Chicago). “In order to fully comprehend the inhumanity of genocide, students need to be able to understand the indifference that has allowed it to repeatedly occur around the world through history and up to today.”

The law states that the State Board of Education may make available to Illinois schools instructional materials for the development of this unit of instruction. Each local school district will set the specifics of the instruction for each grade level in its schools.

“By studying these tragic lessons from history, we can help our children understand the importance of freedom,” said Sen. Collins. “When they recognize that crimes of genocide continue in some corners of the world, even in the 21st century, it will raise their awareness and help them understand what can happen when you judge people by their race, their homeland or their beliefs.”

“We applaud Governor Blagojevich for breaking new ground by signing into law this important educational initiative, a measure which comes fifteen years after the landmark Illinois Holocaust Education Mandate was first enacted,” said Richard S. Hirschhaut, Project and Executive Director of the new Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center. “The new law affirms the continuing relevance of applying the universal lessons of the Holocaust to the tragedies of genocide in our world today. We look forward to bringing these important lessons to future generations through the facilities of the new Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center.”

In June, the governor signed Senate Bill 23, making Illinois the first state in the nation to cut all state financial ties with the oppressive and genocidal Sudanese government. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Jacqueline Collins (D-Chicago) and Rep Lovana Jones (D-Chicago), prohibits Illinois from investing in foreign government bonds of Sudan, investing in companies doing business in or with Sudan, and investing the State pension in companies doing business in or with Sudan.

HB 312 goes into effect immediately.