

Nev. bill would mandate later school start, ethnic study class

By Riley Snyder, AP

Nevada school districts are opposing a bill that would push back school start times and require an ethnic studies course in order to graduate from high school.

Democratic state Sen. Tick Segerblom is the primary sponsor of SB211 and testified on the bill Thursday in the Senate Education Committee.

Segerblom said the bill would require Nevada high school students pass a course in ethnic studies focused on sensitivity to all nationalities and races. The majority of high school history classes are narrowly focused on the achievements of white Americans, he said.

"It's for people of color to be able to learn ways to be prideful of their heritage," Segerblom said. "The world is not just Columbus coming over here."

A number of school district lobbyists testified against the mandate, saying they supported the concept but feared that more graduation requirements would lead to longer school times. Republican state Sen. Scott Hammond, a teacher at Indian Springs High School, said he was concerned about adding more mandates for teachers.

"It seems like every year there's something else that comes down the pipe that they want us to get in the child's head," he said during the hearing.

The proposal would also require classes to start no earlier than 7 a.m. for elementary schools, 8 a.m. for middle schools

and 9 a.m. for high schools.

Republican bill co-sponsor Sen. Becky Harris said the bill would give students additional sleep and more flexibility in scheduling extracurricular activities before school.

The American Academy of Pediatrics issued a policy statement in 2014 saying that a large percentage of teenagers don't get enough sleep and recommended that school districts move back their start times.

Clark County School District lobbyist Nicole Rourke said the district is running a pilot program experimenting with different start times for schools. The price of expanding bus routes and hiring additional staff to comply with the changed start times could cost the district up to \$80 million, she said.

Seegerblom said he's willing to work with the districts to alleviate their concerns but that the ideas were solid. "It's just a question of whether we can afford to do it, and money is always a problem in Nevada," he said.