

California State Senate

SENATOR
BOB HUFF

TWENTY-NINTH SENATE DISTRICT



Senate Bill 129 (Huff and Yee): Heritage Schools

Background: Heritage schools are a relatively recent phenomenon in California. They vary in size and location and typically operate on very small budgets with all-volunteer boards. They play an integral role in our communities and are bound by their commitment to teaching foreign language and history in an effort to maintain California's diversity and cultural heritage.

As California's importance in the global economy grows, so does the importance of the state's students becoming proficient in at least one language other than English. Sadly however, heritage schools are currently being treated as child care facilities due to the absence of a relevant state code section. Without significant reform, these schools can and will be shut down.

The state should be doing as much as it can to encourage the continued operation of cultural language schools. The students form a positive ethnic identity, and these schools help the student compete in an increasingly global economy. Moreover, the culturally enriching activities integral to the heritage school programs foster tolerance and diversity in our communities.

Proposal: Senate Bill 129 will clearly define "heritage school" and require them to file with the Department of Education an affidavit substantially similar to what is required of private schools.

SB 129 offers heritage schools a pathway towards legality and will clear up confusion, reduce the burden to the state and provide a safer environment for students enrolled in the programs.

Contact: Kelly Garman, Office of Senator Bob Huff, 916/651-4029
Eduardo Martinez, Office of Senator Leland Yee, 916/651-4008