

ONE HUNDRED FIFTH LEGISLATURE

SECOND SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 291

Introduced by Kolowski, 31.

WHEREAS, overloaded school backpacks are causing increasing problems with back pain and spinal strain for students across the nation; and

WHEREAS, because spinal ligaments and muscles do not fully develop until after the age of sixteen, overweight backpacks are a source of repeated low-level stress that may result in chronic neck, shoulder, or back pain in children; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown that heavy loads carried on the back have the potential to damage the soft tissues of the shoulder, causing microstructural damage to the nerves and damage to internal organs; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown an increase in curvatures of the spine and compression of intervertebral height when backpacks exceed ten percent of a student's body weight; and

WHEREAS, textbooks have become much heavier in recent years, and, in addition to textbooks, students often carry computers, cell phones, water bottles, running shoes, band instruments, and other equipment needed for studies and extracurricular activities; and

WHEREAS, a recent study found that many students carry backpacks exceeding ten percent of their body weight. Some students even carry backpacks weighing twenty-five percent or more of their body weight; and

WHEREAS, backpacks are frequently worn incorrectly, often slung over one shoulder or allowed to hang significantly below the waistline, increasing the weight on the shoulders and making the child lean forward when walking or stoop forward when standing to compensate for the weight.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, SECOND SESSION:

1. That the Legislature strongly recommends that all school administrators, teachers, parents, and students be educated about the potential health impact of heavy backpacks and take proactive measures to avoid injury.

2. That schools should work to assess the extent to which students use overweight backpacks and take steps to lessen the need to carry all school materials and books back and forth each day, such as using handouts or workbooks for homework assignments so that students can leave their heaviest books at home or school.

3. That schools should develop school policies and talking points encouraging students to:

a. Keep the weight of their backpacks under ten percent of their body weight;

b. Use ergonomic backpacks with individualized compartments to efficiently hold books and equipment;

c. Use both shoulder straps instead of slinging the backpack over one shoulder; and

d. Use wide, padded straps that can adjust to fit the student's body.