



April 5, 2022

Dear State Board of Education Members,

As you revise social studies standards for the state's more than 5 million public school students, we write today to urge that you ensure your process and the new standards reflect the truth of our nation's history and the growing diversity of students in our classrooms.

At this very moment in Texas, the stories of our diverse communities are being removed from the shelves of school libraries, and the truthful history of our state and nation is being erased from public school lesson plans. New laws attempt to restrict what schools can teach about the history of discrimination and inequality. Politicians demand that certain books, particularly those that address the experiences of people from marginalized communities, be banned from classrooms and libraries. Teachers, librarians and administrators find themselves under siege from politicians' wild accusations, irresponsible threats and demands that schools censor information they simply don't like.

But the State Board of Education can be a champion for truth in our public schools. Indeed, social studies classrooms are the place where students can learn about our nation's rich history, including where we have triumphed and have fallen short in the long process of building – as our Constitution promises – a more perfect union that guarantees justice, security and liberty for all who live here. So we call on state board members to set aside politics and focus on key ways to ensure that Texas public schools can teach the truth to the next generation of Texas students.

The social studies revision process should recognize and honor the importance of diversity and inclusion. That means, in part, remaining open to new perspectives and seeking the input of diverse voices and experts. It also means that the new standards should recognize the growing ethnic, racial and social diversity in our state's classrooms. Students are engaged and motivated to succeed when they can see themselves and the experiences and contributions of others like them in their textbooks and lessons.

Just as importantly, the new standards should focus on teaching the truth in our classrooms. Too often the revision of curriculum standards becomes a battleground between ideological perspectives. It doesn't have to be that way, even in areas that often are the most contentious in social studies debates, such as:

- The standards should teach the truth about the history, cruelty and inhumanity of slavery and its central role in causing the bloody Civil War that temporarily split our nation in half.

Perpetuating the “Lost Cause” myth that the war was fought over some noble cause like “states’ rights” obscures the reality that the so-called “right” at stake was the right to enslave human beings. The standards should be clear about the truth.

- The standards should teach the truth about the history of racial discrimination and inequality. Contrary to the claims of too many politicians and political activists, the purpose of teaching this truth is not to assign blame. The purpose is to help students understand the origins of challenges our nation still struggles with today. Teaching the truth will help equip students with the knowledge they need as adults to find solutions and work on building our “more perfect union” together.
- The standards should teach the truth about the right of all Americans to vote and participate fully in our democracy without unnecessary restrictions limiting that right.
- The standards should teach the truth about the experiences of marginalized communities. This should include learning about laws and court cases that have extended nondiscrimination protections to women, communities of color, LGBTQ Americans and others.
- The standards should teach the truth about the very real and deep importance of religion in our nation’s history, but without inventing influences to advance a political agenda. The standards should also make clear that our nation’s founders protected religious freedom for all in this country by barring government from favoring or disfavoring any particular religion.

The State Board of Education’s work over the next few months will guide the education of the next generation of Texas students. For that reason, a broad and diverse coalition of education, civil rights and parent groups has come together under the banner [Teach the Truth](#) to monitor the state board’s work. We are prepared to provide whatever help and resources we can to help board members adopt standards that are based on facts and sound scholarship. We want to work as partners, not adversaries, to help you ensure that Texas students get the education they need to succeed and to help our state and nation tackle the challenges we face now and in the future.

Sincerely,

American Civil Liberties Union of Texas (ACLU TX)
Anti-Defamation League - Texas
Asian Texans for Justice
Children’s Defense Fund
Equality Texas
Ethnic Studies Network of Texas
Every Texan
Humans Right Campaign
Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA)
Jolt
Pastors For Texas Children
Progress Texas
Texas American Federation of Teachers
Texas Freedom Network
Texas State Teachers Association
Transgender Education Network of Texas (TENT)