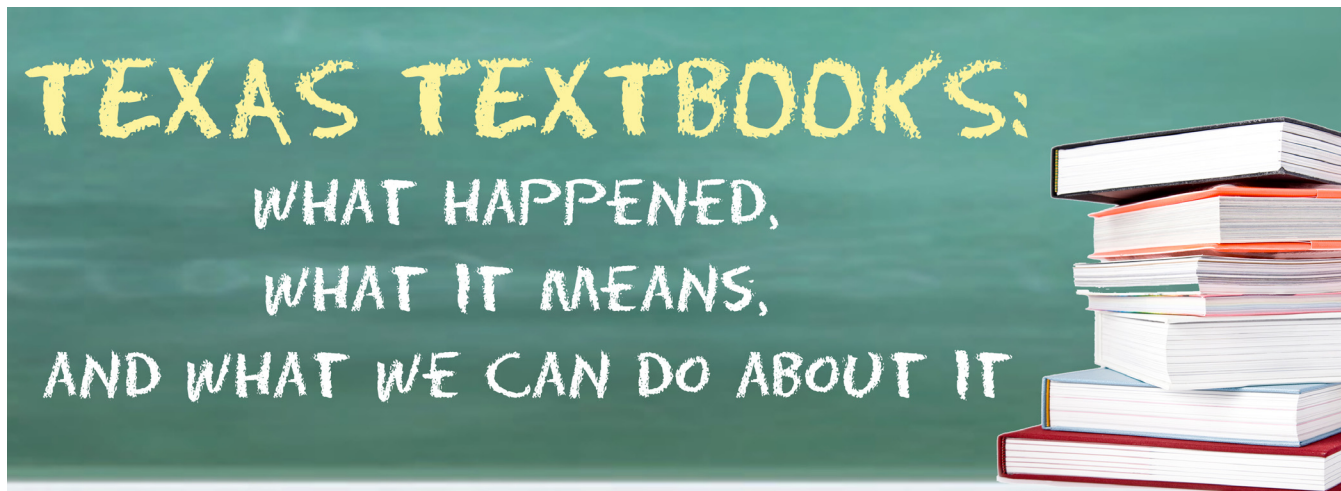


IN FOCUS

RIGHT WING WATCH



Introduction

Religious Right leaders in Texas have been waging war against science and history for the past few decades. A primary target and battleground has been the state's public schools, in particular the statewide approval process for textbooks. People For the American Way Foundation first started working with Texans to resist Religious Right takeovers of textbooks back in the 1980s.

The Religious Right has invested so heavily in Texas textbooks because of the national implications. School districts in Texas have to buy books from a state-approved list, and Texas is such

PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY FOUNDATION FIRST STARTED WORKING WITH TEXANS TO RESIST RELIGIOUS RIGHT TAKEOVERS OF TEXTBOOKS BACK IN THE 1980S.

an enormous market that textbook publishers will generally do whatever they can to get on that list. Textbooks written and edited to meet Texas standards end up being used all

over the country. So Religious Right leaders in Texas can doom millions of American students to stunted, scientifically dubious science books and ideologically slanted history and social studies books. Advances in printing technology make it easier to prevent that from happening now, but it will take vigilance to keep publishers from following the path of least resistance.

The war heated up in recent years after far-right groups won a working majority on the elected state board of education and Gov. Rick Perry appointed the ringleader of the far-right faction, dentist Don McLeroy, as chair of the board in 2007. Since then, the Religious Right faction focused on standards for the approval and purchase of science textbooks for the next decade. McLeroy and his allies stripped any mention of the age of the universe from the science standards (those millions and billions of years are annoying to young-earth creationists who insist the universe is only 6,000 years old). In addition, the new standards will essentially require the teaching of evolution denialism and climate change denialism.

The most recent battle, over the standards for new social studies textbooks, culminated in May with the adoption of social studies standards that give the far-right faction and its Religious Right advisors far too many victories in their efforts to replace history with ideology and turn

A joint project of People For the American Way and People For the American Way Foundation

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public school classrooms into Heritage Foundation seminars.

The New Social Studies Standards

By the time the Religious Right faction of the board of education was done with the standards, they had created a mess. Some of the information is just wrong. Some of it is lifted from Wikipedia. Much of it is brazenly partisan and political. And it just doesn't add up to anything coherent. In fact, more than 1200 historians and social studies professors recently said that the revised standards are going to make it hard for teachers to teach and for students to get what they'll need to succeed.

Of course, that's not how Religious Right leaders see it. Right-wing activist Phyllis Schlafly recently praised the standards for kicking "liberal bias" out of the standards. "Texas textbooks will now have to mention 'the importance of personal responsibility for life choices' instead of blaming society for everything and expecting government to provide remedies for all social ills," she crowed. Schlafly didn't mention that she herself had been added to the list of figures required for study, along with Newt Gingrich, the Moral Majority, and

THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT IS TRYING TO REPLACE HISTORY WITH IDEOLOGY AND TURN PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASSROOMS INTO HERITAGE FOUNDATION SEMINARS.

the Heritage Foundation.

One goal of the board's far-right faction was the whitewashing of Joseph McCarthy, so they required the teaching of historical material that they believe (wrongly) shows he was vindicated. The board dropped labor and civil rights leaders Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta; and took out Ted Kennedy and Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latina on the U.S. Supreme Court. References to the slave trade were replaced with "triangular trade." Right-wing advisors to the board wanted them to drop Thurgood Marshall, the historic civil rights lawyer and Supreme Court justice, but Marshall made the cut.

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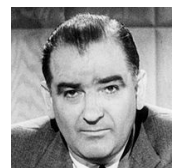
The board also turned the teaching of religious liberty and the First Amendment on its head. It rejected an amendment about the importance of the founders' decision to include the First Amendment to prevent the government from favoring one religion over another. Instead, board members included language to require textbooks to "compare and contrast" the language of the First Amendment with the concept of separation of church and state.

The board changed language regarding the study of civil rights movements, like women's suffrage and the African American civil rights movement. Board members voted to focus not on the decades of strategic thinking and organizing that went into building support for democratic change but on the majority which ultimately bestowed those rights.

Among other problems with the standards, identified by the Texas Freedom Network, which has closely monitored and challenged the Religious Right's efforts:

- A revised standard that downplays the central role that the issue of slavery played in causing the Civil War
- A new requirement that students contrast the

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ideas in Confederate President Jefferson Davis's inaugural address (which didn't even mention slavery) with speeches by U.S. President Abraham Lincoln

- Downplaying the significance of Enlightenment ideas on political revolutions from the 1750s to the present
- Revised standards that exaggerate religious influences on the Founders and the founding documents

THE BOARD CHANGED LANGUAGE REGARDING THE STUDY OF CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS, LIKE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT.

- Removing the concept of "responsibility for the common good," which one board member criticized as too communistic

How did this happen?

Earlier this year the *Washington Monthly* published an excellent article about the history of the disputes with a focus on McLeroy and his exploits on the board. Here's an excerpt:

The Texas legislature finally intervened in 1995, after a particularly heated skirmish over health textbooks—

among other things, the board demanded that publishers pull illustrations of techniques for breast self-examination and swap a photo of a briefcase-toting woman for one of a mother baking a cake. The adoption process was overhauled so that instead of being able to rewrite books willy-nilly, the school board worked with the Texas Education Agency, the state's department of education, to develop a set of standards. Any book that conformed and got the facts right had to be accepted, which diluted the influence of citizen activists....

After that, Religious Right leaders focused on electing members to the board, and with help from Religious Right groups, Republicans had 10 out of 15 seats on the board; seven held by an ultraconservative and another by an ally who voted with them often enough to give them a working majority. Gov. Perry made McLeroy chair in 2007 just in time for the current round of standard-setting. McLeroy insists that "we are a Christian nation founded on Christian principles. The way I evaluate history textbooks is first I see how they cover Christianity and Israel. Then I see how they treat Ronald Reagan—he needs to get credit for saving the world from communism and for the good economy over the last twenty years because he lowered taxes." He made the most of his chance.

McLeroy has flexed his muscle particularly brazenly in the struggle over social studies standards. When the process began last January, the Texas Education Agency assembled a team to tackle each grade. In the case of eleventh-grade U.S. history, the group was made up of classroom teachers and history professors—that is, until McLeroy added a man

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Dolores Huerta: A Perfect Example of Good Citizenship



When the Texas Board of Education voted to adopt new curriculum standards, it made outrageous revisions across the curriculum, but one revision hit particularly close to home.

In a 6-9 vote, the Board rejected a proposal to restore labor and civil rights leader and People For the American Way board member Dolores Huerta to the elementary school curriculum. Huerta was previously taught as an example of good citizenship in third grade history classes, but was removed from the curriculum in January.

In 1962, Huerta co-founded the National Farm Workers Association with César Chávez, and a few years later she directed the United Farm Workers' landmark national grape boycott. A key figure in Chicano history, Dolores Huerta was awarded an honorary degree from Princeton University as well as the Community of Christ International Peace Award. As she celebrates her 80th birthday, she continues to be an important leader and is deeply engaged in the fight against Arizona's discriminatory racial profiling law.

The Texas Board of Education may have wanted to erase her from our history, but if there's one thing that's clear it's that Dolores Huerta is willing to stand up for what's right. We can't think of a better example of good citizenship.

TEXAS TEXTBOOKS

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?



2007: Gov. Perry makes radical right-winger Don McLeroy chair of the Texas school board.



2010: McLeroy, adds Bill Ames, an Eagle Forum volunteer and Minuteman militia member, to a history textbook review panel.



Ames puts in a call to McLeroy, who handed over the draft standards for every grade to the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a conservative think tank, for review.



McLeroy and his colleagues then invited a team of their own "expert" advisers: Texas GOP leader and Religious Right pseudo-historian David Barton and evangelical pastor Peter Marshall.



2010: Those advisers came up with long lists of requested changes and pushed many of them through in sessions in January, March, and May.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1. THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT IS NOT DEAD; THE CULTURE WAR IS ALIVE AND WELL.

2. FOX "NEWS" IS PROPAGANDA ARM FOR THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

3. GOP LEADERS AND RELIGIOUS RIGHT ARE IN CLOSE ALLIANCE

(GOP LEADERS + RELIGIOUS RIGHT = CLOSE ALLIANCE)

WHAT CAN WE DO?

1. PETITION TEXTBOOK PUBLISHERS (LIKE PFAW DID)



2. ADVOCATE FOR STATE POLICIES (LIKE CALIFORNIA DID)



3. SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERSHIP (VOTE IN SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS)

named Bill Ames. Ames—a volunteer with the ultra-conservative Eagle Forum and Minuteman militia member who occasionally publishes angry screeds accusing “illegal immigrant aliens” of infesting America with diseases or blasting the “environmentalist agenda to destroy America”—pushed to infuse the standards with his right-wing views and even managed to add a line requiring books to give space to conservative icons, “such as Newt Gingrich, Phyllis Schlafly and the Moral Majority,” without any liberal counterweight. But for the most part, the teachers on the team refused to go along. So Ames put in a call to McLeroy, who demanded to see draft standards for every grade and then handed them over to the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a conservative think tank founded by his benefactor, James Leininger. The group combed through the papers and compiled a list of seemingly damning omissions. Among other things, its analysts claimed that the writing teams had stripped out key historical figures like George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Pat Hardy, a Republican board member who has sat in on some of the writing-team meetings, insists this isn’t true. “No one was trying to remove George Washington!” she says. “That group took very preliminary, unfinished documents and drew all kinds of wrongheaded conclusions.”

So McLeroy and his colleagues invited a team of its own expert advisers to weigh in. Among the “expert” advisers were Texas GOP leader and Religious Right pseudo-historian David Barton and evangelical pastor Peter Marshall. Those advisers came up with long lists of requested changes and pushed many of them through in sometimes long and contentious sessions in January, March, and May.

SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS IN TEXAS AND ELSEWHERE MAY BE SADDLED WITH HIGHLY POLITICIZED AND SUB-PAR EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS AND TEXTBOOKS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS.

RIGHT WINGER **BILL AMES** MANAGED TO ADD A LINE REQUIRING BOOKS TO GIVE SPACE TO CONSERVATIVE ICONS, SUCH AS NEWT GINGRICH, PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY AND THE MORAL MAJORITY, WITHOUT ANY LIBERAL COUNTERWEIGHT.



What does it mean?

First and foremost, it means that schools and students in Texas and elsewhere may be saddled with highly politicized and sub-par educational standards and textbooks for the next 10 years. But there are also some bigger-picture takeaways.

The Religious Right is not dead; the culture war is alive and well.

The Religious Right has been manipulating the content and selection of Texas textbooks for decades, and they used the political process to overcome reforms meant to depoliticize the educational process. They worked hard to elect committed ideologues to the state board of education. There, with help from their close ally Gov. Rick Perry and the enthusiastic support of national Religious Right figures, they were dogged in pursuit of their goal. And they were largely successful. National Religious Right figures weighed in as well with support for the claims that the board members were only trying to inject “balance” into the curriculum by standing up to leftist elites who wanted to indoctrinate students with their America-hating ways.

Film at 11: Fox “News” is propaganda arm for the Religious Right

The extremists on the board of education have had a powerful cheerleading section on Fox News, which has given typically one-sided coverage to the standards process and labeled the Texas Freedom Network and others “troublemakers.” Earlier this year, Fox personalities were repeating false information so often that the Texas Education Agency actually put out a press release criticizing Fox for repeatedly broadcasting “highly inaccurate information” about the standards, including claims that George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were being taken out of classrooms.

GOP leaders and Religious Right extremists are in close alliance

David Barton, one of McLeroy's "expert" advisors, has made a career for himself marketing his bogus "Christian nation" view of American history. A former chair of the Texas Republican Party, Barton is a hired gun for the national GOP, pushing the presidential ticket in evangelical churches and reaching out to African Americans with a "documentary" blaming the Democratic Party for slavery, Jim Crow, and lynchings, and crediting the GOP with passage of civil rights laws. Barton's history lesson ends there, ignoring the GOP's admittedly racist southern strategy and 50 years of GOP resistance to civil rights progress.

Barton pushed one of the most ridiculous and ridiculously partisan efforts to amend the standards. Barton argued that because the U.S. is a republic rather than a pure democracy, references to the democratic process or "democratic values" should be replaced with "republican values."

Not surprisingly, Barton has lavishly praised the new standards as "extremely balanced, extremely fair, and extremely thorough." Hmm, fair and balanced, where have we heard that before?

By the way, as the Texas Freedom Network has noted, the Texas Republican Party is now chaired by Cathie Adams, formerly head of the Texas Eagle Forum, which will honor Don McLeroy with the Forum's "Patriot Award" during the state GOP convention in June.

What can we do?

Petition Textbook Publishers

The most important thing that can be done now is to limit the damage by preventing the standards from infecting schools and schoolbooks nationwide. As soon as the board of education approved the Religious Right's deeply flawed standards, People For the American Way Foundation launched a petition campaign aimed at national textbook publishers. On June 2, People For the American Way Foundation, joined by CREDO and Brave New Foundation, delivered over 131,000 petitions to the offices of McGraw-Hill in New York, urging the publisher to reject Texas' right-wing curriculum standards and publish textbooks free of political ideology or bias. You

PEAW PETITIONING TEXTBOOK PUBLISHERS

People For the American Way has a long history of fighting to keep right-wing ideology out of textbooks—especially in Texas. Given our history and our commitment to fighting the right, this battle was one we took on with pride. PFAW has been mobilizing our members in Texas and around the nation to take a stand for textbooks that put quality education before revisionist ideology.

In Texas, our members have been pressuring the Board of Education to put facts—not far-right propaganda—in the state's curriculum. Given the nature of the far-right majority on the board, it's an uphill battle, but it's one we intend to win. Throughout the rest of the country, we're focusing our efforts and attention textbook publishers, demanding that they keep this pseudo-history out of their textbooks. Unless we make clear that Americans want real history in their textbooks, we run the risk that Texas's dishonest curriculum could find its way into "national editions" of the books. No matter what happens in the Lone Star state, we

need to ensure that the lies and propaganda don't spread nationwide.

People For the American Way Foundation recently coordinated with allied organizations to drop off more than 131,000 petitions at the offices of textbook publisher McGraw-Hill in New York. And we weren't alone. We were joined by a group of seniors from a Bronx independent living facility who were so outraged by Texas's move that they printed out People For's online petition and carried it door to door to get more signatures. They realized that even though Texas was a long way away, their values were under attack.

We'll keep working make sure every student had a textbook based on facts, not political ideology. We hope you'll join us.

Pictures from the petition drop are below



can add your voice to the campaign at <http://www.pfaw.org/textbooks>.

Advocate for state policies

In California, a state legislator has introduced a bill that would require state education officials to ensure that textbooks being considered in that state have not been overly influenced by the Texas standards. You can encourage your own state legislators to introduce similar measures.

School Board Membership

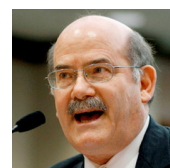
Of course, the Religious Right was able to wreak havoc on school standards because they backed candidates who

won elections, a reminder to progressive Americans to pay attention to who is running in down-ballot races like school boards, where low turnout especially in primaries can provide an opportunity for extremists to win without much public attention.

A Bit of Good News

The Texas Freedom Network and its allies worked to keep a bright spotlight on shenanigans of the far-right members of the board of education. That spotlight was effective in alerting educators nationwide about the threat and encouraging Texans to pay closer attention. Even some Texas Republicans were disgusted by the spectacle, so much so that McLeroy lost his primary election this spring and will no longer be on the board after the elections this fall. That's good news, but comes too

"WE ARE A CHRISTIAN NATION FOUNDED ON CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES. THE WAY I EVALUATE HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IS FIRST I SEE HOW THEY COVER CHRISTIANITY AND ISRAEL. THEN I SEE HOW THEY TREAT RONALD REAGAN."



late to prevent the damage he's

DON MCLEROY, FORMER TEXAS SCHOOL BOARD



People For the American Way is dedicated to making the promise of America real for every American: Equality. Freedom of speech. Freedom of religion. The right to seek justice in a court of law. The right to cast a vote that counts. The American Way.

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