



Students have a right to learn an accurate account of history

No matter our color or background, most of us want our kids to have an education that teaches the truth about who we are and teaches our students to face challenges with integrity so that they can reckon with our past and create a better future. But with Senate Bill 3, the same politicians seeking to silence our voices by suppressing our votes want to force teachers to peddle lies about our history. We are asking legislators to respect our educators' expertise in providing an honest education that sets our children up for success.

Ambiguous language is bad law

Educators enter their classrooms with one agenda: to help their students succeed. They have every right to assume that their good faith effort will keep them on the right side of the law. But, in an effort to sow confusion and division in our communities, the legislative writers of SB3 appear to have designed the legislation to set educators up to fail. The language is too vague to parse without creating professional development academies to train educators to use the

new, revised curriculum. It will take several years to establish those academies, but the bill will go into effect this fall. How are districts and educators supposed to proceed in the meantime? Superintendents will be forced to spend district funds now to hire counsel or later to defend educators and curricula.

Restricting discussions of current events

Many teachers discuss current events with their students. This is considered an instructional best practice because their course material is specifically focused on current events and Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills guidelines include directives that they do so. Teaching current events helps teachers provide richer context and deeper understanding of concepts and presents diverse perspectives to encourage critical thinking — a necessary skill for college readiness. The chilling effect that SB3's vague language creates will rob our students of this valuable instructional tool and exclude them from the most important conversations of civic life.

Subverting the system

We believe that Texas students deserve to learn from curricula that reflect the best possible scholarship in the subject area being taught, and to that end, Texas has a long-established process in place to craft TEKS and curriculum standards. It involves the State Board of Education and includes the input of subject matter experts and educators to create the academic rigor necessary to prepare students to succeed in the future. SB3 is an attempt to circumvent the established procedure by inserting political agents into an otherwise academic process. This constitutes an unacceptable legislative overreach that will shortchange students and educators. Students are best served by a curriculum that stands the test of time and isn't just a reflection of whomever happens to hold a legislative majority.

Penalizing the most dedicated

Parents regularly seek to place their kids in classes with dynamic educators who are willing to challenge students to grow, rather than learn by rote. The chilling effects of SB3's vague prohibitions and penalties will only serve to diminish the quality of education by stifling educator speech. The bill is so vaguely written that it could be construed to impact teachers of all subjects. The educators most likely to be accused of running afoul of such a broadly interpretable law are the ones who are most dedicated to teaching their students about the hard truths of our shared experience. These are the educators who are least willing to compromise their commitment to fostering the higher order critical thinking skills that are so crucial to creating the next generation of leaders. We should be celebrating these educators, not undermining them.

Restricting resources

To create the most enriching experience for their students, educators often turn to outside subject matter experts for source material, training and supplements. SB3 includes provisions that appear to prohibit educators from taking advantage of professional development opportunities and forbid them from using curriculum and teaching resources created by professional educator and historical associations and other experts. The legislation is so vague that it could conceivably restrict the use of teaching resources and lesson plans from the Texas State Historical Association, the premier historical association in the state, which accepts funding from private and corporate donations, and The Bullock Museum, which is funded in part by the Texas State History Museum Foundation, which also raises private funds.

Let our kids be students, not political pawns

Among the concerns raised by this bill are the further erosion of the respect teachers are due as professionals and the disservice the lack of intellectual rigor will do to our students. It will leave our students ill-equipped for the demands of higher education, or to even have informed conversations in daily life about history, controversial topics or current events. Educators have a duty to help students understand what they see, what they hear and what they experience. That includes the truth about the experiences that came before them. Teaching the truth connects history to current events and presents our students with accurate information about our past, allowing them to realize their own agency in society.

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