

Background: The State Board of Education is made up of 15 elected members from across the state. One of their most high-profile responsibilities is deciding what is — and isn't — taught in our public schools. They review curriculum standards, and textbooks are published based on those standards. The SBOE is meant to create curricula that teach the truth and serve the needs of all Texas students, but instead, its far-right members tend to use their extreme influence to push a political agenda.

The SBOE is reviewing the Social Studies Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS. After approving a preliminary draft in early April, the Board will vote on final approval during its June 22-26 meeting. If adopted, the new standards would take effect in the 2030-31 school year.

Social Studies TEKS Talking Points

Core Message: Texas students deserve honest, complete, and grade-appropriate history, not a rushed, politically driven curriculum that fails them in the classroom.

The fight over the Social Studies TEKS is about whether Texas can be trusted to educate its children well. Every parent, educator, and community member has a stake in getting this right. The SBOE's rushed timeline, ideologically motivated content advisors, and exclusion of teachers from the process put that at risk.

- We're fighting against a rushed, murky process that shuts out parents, educators, and communities.
 - To best serve our young Texas children, we can't rush this process. We need transparency and accuracy in how the TEKS are created.
 - The current process is moving too quickly for parents, educators, and our community to be accurately informed and meaningfully involved.
- The content advisors shaping these standards do not represent Texas classrooms or communities.
- We need a holistic review, not surface edits, to avoid another 2010-style failure.
- Texas students of every background deserve to see themselves in the curriculum.
- All Texas students deserve standards designed to help them succeed, not standards that set them up to struggle. Standards must be age-appropriate, research-based, and teachable.
 - It's important for any new standards to provide research-based, grade-appropriate concepts. They should be based on research about grade-appropriate learning, ensuring students build understanding progressively rather than being overwhelmed with content they're not ready to absorb.

Conflict of Interest: So far, these drafts have been more about promoting ideological agendas than truly giving students an education that helps them succeed in the 21st century. That's clear when you see how prominent right-wing political advocacy groups shaped the drafts.

- The Texas Public Policy Foundation has had a heavy influence on these drafts. They paid \$70,000 to Don Frazier's Texas Center at Schreiner University to develop new

social studies TEKS two years ago, and then board members appointed Frazier to the key panel of content advisors who have been guiding the SBOE's TEKS revision. Frazier didn't publicly disclose this conflict of interest.

Frazier isn't the only content advisor with links to TPPF and other right-wing advocacy groups:

- Robert Koons has served as a senior fellow at TPPF.
- David Barton, head of the Christian-right organization WallBuilders, has argued that the separation of church and state is a myth, and insists that the Founders wanted a Christian nation with its government and laws based on the Bible.
- David Randall is head of the conservative Civics Alliance, which has developed its own right-leaning, controversial social studies standards.
- Jordan Adams worked for the education department at the far-right Hillsdale College, which has produced its own controversial social studies curriculum.

This is one way political advocacy groups on the far right are using public schools to push an ideological agenda.

It's troubling that this potential conflict of interest wasn't disclosed. It's even more troubling that the board's chairman and other Republican board members shut down questions about it at the last meeting. This is just one more reason why the Board should pause this ridiculously rushed process.

Parents and other taxpayers want standards that focus on teaching the truth, not political agendas. They have a right to know the ways political advocacy groups like TPPF are trying to shape these new standards and what millions of Texas kids will learn in their public school classrooms.

The Board should pause this process, investigate what happened here, and make sure the teachers, not political groups, lead in helping students get fact-based education.