

March 9, 2010

Chairwoman Lowe and
Members of the Texas State Board of Education
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas, 78701

Dear Chairwoman Lowe and Board Members:

As you move into the final stages of your revision to the state's social studies curriculum standards (TEKS), we the undersigned civil rights organizations urge you to adopt standards that present a historically accurate and complete account of the struggle for civil rights in our nation's history.

Specifically, the following changes – or proposed changes – to the social studies standards represent a departure from the historical record with respect to individuals and organizations involved in the civil rights movement.

- **Minimizing efforts by ethnic minorities and women to win equal economic opportunities and political rights**
*An amendment adopted at the January 2010 board meeting changed a standard requiring students to “explain actions taken by people from racial, ethnic, gender, and religious groups to expand economic opportunities and political rights in American society” by **removing** the words “from racial, ethnic, gender, and religious groups.” The following standard, “explain actions taken by people to expand economic opportunities and political rights for racial, ethnic and religious minorities as well as women in American society,” would more accurately reflect the historical importance of efforts to achieve economic opportunities and political rights.*
- **Minimizing the impact of the civil rights movement in America**
An amendment distributed by a board member at the January 2010 meeting – but not yet voted on – states that the civil rights movement created “unrealistic expectations for equal outcomes.” The stated justification for this addition is to correct a “politically correct view” of the civil rights movement. This amendment is historically inaccurate and not factually supported.
- **Minimizing the role of civil rights advocates to achieve passage of the Civil Rights Acts and Equal Rights for Women**
The Board should resist any effort to downplay the critical role played by advocates who struggled to bring injustices to the national forefront and to achieve passage of civil and equal rights legislation, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and women's suffrage. Don McLeroy at the September board meeting gave instruction to curriculum writing teams to make clear that “it wasn't minorities that got the Civil Rights Act; it was the majority that did it.” Other board members and reviewers have

repeated this view. In fact, the President and Congress in promoting and passing the Civil Rights Act, responded to public pressure to enact the Civil Rights Act, including the March on Washington.

The powerful history of our country's long and continuing battle to overcome discrimination and secure the rights, freedom and equality of all is an essential part of America's history and value system. We urge you to prevent any inaccuracies that may find their way into the social studies TEKS curriculum through historically inaccurate amendments

We appreciate your consideration of our views, and thank you for your service to the students of Texas.

Respectfully,

Terri Burke
American Civil Liberties Union of Texas

Paul Herrera, Texas State Commander
American G.I. Forum

Mark L. Briskman
Anti-Defamation League North Texas/Oklahoma Region

Martin B. Cominsky
Anti-Defamation League Regional Director Southwest Region

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Jesse Jai McNeil, Jr. Ed.D.
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Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)

Carrol A. Thomas, Ed.D.
National Alliance of Black School Educators

Marlene Cohen and Janet Neuenschwander
National Council of Jewish Women Texas State Public Affairs

Jessie Romero
Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE)

Julie Arias
Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE)

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Texas League of United Latin American Citizens H.O.P.E.

Gary Bledsoe
Texas State Conference of branches of the NAACP

Paul T. Henley, Ph.D.
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