



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on April 15, 2011

California Bill Would Mandate Teaching of LGBT Contributions

The California state legislature is considering a measure that would force social studies teachers to recognize the contributions to society made by “lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans.”

The bill, [SB 48](#), is styled the “FAIR Education Act.” The principal sponsor of the measure is State Senator Mark Leno (D-San Francisco, pictured left), who explains on his website that his proposal “would ensure that LGBT Americans are recognized for their important historical contributions to the economic, political, and social development of California.”



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Leno’s office provided the following synopsis of the bill:

[T]he Fair, Accurate, Inclusive and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act ensures that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans are included and recognized for their important historical contributions to the economic, political, and social development of California, and ensures that discriminatory bias and negative stereotypes based on sexual orientation are prohibited in school activities and instruction, and instructional materials.

Applicable laws in California already mandate that students in the state’s public schools be taught from texts that “accurately portray the role and contribution of culturally and racially diverse groups including Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and European Americans to the total development of California and the United States.”

This bill would revise the list of culturally and racially diverse groups to also include Pacific Islanders, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans, persons with disabilities, and other ethnic and cultural groups.

Given the controversial requirements of this bill, the roster of organizations aligning to oppose its passage is long and growing. The list includes the California Catholic Conference, California Concerned Women for America, the Conservative Party (California), and the Traditional Values Coalition.

The Calvary Christian Church in the city of St. Helena in the Napa Valley adamantly [opposes](#) the bill and believes that the measure:

intends to play with the minds of all California’s students; even as young as Kindergarten! Whatever the personal beliefs are of adults on homosexuality, bisexuality and transgender, the state has NO RIGHT trying to influence the beliefs, thinking and mindset of young students! You are turning teachers into state-sanctioned propagandists by forcing them to teach our youth about sexual lifestyles that parents do not want taught.



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Another vocal opponent of the measure, the Concerned Women of America, [told](#) the Senate that it believes the measure's goal:

is to be exclusive of other people or viewpoints not in agreement with the homosexual, bisexual, or transgender lifestyles. At a time when our state lacks dollars to pay for the current needs in education, it is incredible that this legislature is actually considering adding more financial burden on schools to pay for this evaluation for new textbooks.

In an email published online by the [San Francisco Chronicle](#), Ron Prentice, the CEO of the California Family Council, explained that his disapproval of the measure stems from the fact that it:

forces the inclusion of LGBT persons into social science curriculum based on their sexual orientation alone. Senator Leno's intention with SB48 is to increase every public school student's exposure to the homosexual lifestyle, while disallowing any accurate but potentially unfavorable content to be included in the related curriculum.

Similarly, a concerned parent testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee, worried that, "When you start at the age of 5 and 6 teaching these children about gender preferences, you're confusing them." "We are going to protect our children." The father of a child in the Alameda district asserted that in his opinion instruction in matters of morality should be left to parents and that there was danger to children from the likelihood of contradictory messages being sent from school and home.

Predictably, Senator Leno doesn't agree. "The genius of our democracy is that it does not allow one interpretation of any one particular holy book to become state law," he said. By ignoring the accomplishments and role of gays, lesbians, disabled people and others throughout time, "we are currently censoring history."

As noted in the [story](#) in the *Chronicle*:

Leno noted that specific content used in curriculum textbooks would be determined by the state Board of Education and local school boards, through the public process.

The curriculum, for example, might include the fact that Harvey Milk was the first openly gay person to be elected to public office in California just as it includes that Willie Brown was the first African American speaker of the Assembly, according to the legislative analysis of the bill.

As for the accusation leveled at Leno by critics of his bill that he is advancing his own pro-homosexual agenda, Leno responded: "This is about a political agenda — a political agenda that promotes respect, dignity and validation for human life," he said during the Senate hearing last week. "An agenda that promotes loving thy neighbor as thyself. That's what this agenda is about."

A student quoted in the piece printed in the *Chronicle* praised the proposal and the prospect of reduced bullying of homosexuals in California schools. "I would feel that then I was included in the history of America, that I wasn't being blocked out on purpose," said the 16-year-old, who also calls herself "pansexual," which means gender doesn't matter to her.

The measure was narrowly approved by both the Senate Judiciary Committee and the Senate Education Committee and is now being deliberated by the whole of the State Senate. If that body passes the bill, it will go to the state Assembly for consideration.

Photo: Then-California assemblyman Mark Leno waves to the spectators during San Francisco's 38th annual Gay Pride parade on, June 29, 2008.



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