



Written by [James Heiser](#) on May 27, 2010

Texas Board of Education Gets the Facts Right

For several months, a battle has been waged in Texas over the future of what will be taught in the public schools, and it appears that the momentum is in the direction of fact based education, much to the dismay of liberal activists.

As Rebecca Terrell [wrote for *The New American* in mid-March](#):

New textbook standards approved in Texas are poised to revolutionize public-school curricula nationwide, and liberal educators are furious. Every year the Texas State Board of Education revises a particular subject curriculum, outlining rules that school districts must follow in purchasing teaching materials with state money. Since Texas is the single largest purchaser of textbooks in the country, it holds sway over content of books available on the market to all states.



Thus, there is a great deal at stake in such decisions for the future education of a generation of young Americans, and it appears that the controversial struggle has produced some remarkable improvements in the textbook content. According to an Associated Press article (“Texas board adopts new social studies curriculum”), some of the changes that liberal activists perceive as ‘radical’ adjustments are simple statements of fact:

Texas schoolchildren will be required to learn that the words “separation of church and state” aren’t in the Constitution and evaluate whether the United Nations undermines U.S. sovereignty under new social studies curriculum.

In final votes late Friday, conservatives on the State Board of Education strengthened requirements on teaching the Judeo-Christian influences of the nation’s Founding Fathers and required that the U.S. government be referred to as a “constitutional republic” rather than “democratic.”

In light of the widespread misunderstanding of such fundamental facts concerning the American Republic, it is perhaps not too surprising that AP’s April Castro would highlight such statements as the initial paragraphs of her article. But the examples simply illustrate the absurdity of the leftwing attacks on the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE). As former board [chairman Don McLeroy stated](#) for *The New American* several weeks ago:

“The thing that scares me the most is I see our country so divided right now. Vice President Biden recently said, ‘We’re charting a fundamentally different course for our country,’ and we [on the



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SBOE] have an obligation to Texas students to make sure they understand the original principles upon which America was founded.”

As is typical of liberal activism, opponents of the SBOE majority are apparently contemplating an ‘end run’ around the authority of the board. In the words of the AP:

At least one state lawmaker vowed legislative action to “rein in” the board.

“I am disturbed that a majority of the board decided their own political agendas were more important than the education of Texas children,” said Rep. Mike Villarreal, a San Antonio Democrat.

The irony of Rep. Villarreal’s claim is worthy of note, as it serves as one of several incidents of unintended humor in the attacks by leftists on the board’s fulfillment of its legal responsibilities.

What does the AP identify as an example of the “political agenda” of the SBOE?

In one of the most significant curriculum changes, the board diluted the rationale for the separation of church and state in a high school government class, noting that the words were not in the Constitution and requiring students to compare and contrast the judicial language with the First Amendment’s wording.

Assertions by Ms. Castro aside, the board did not “dilute the rationale”; if the rationale is diluted, that was done by the facts. Students will now be required to critically weigh the question: If “separation of church and state” is not in the First Amendment, what are the implications of the actual text of the Bill of Rights.

Another point of unintended humor in the Associated Press article was the following:

Educators have blasted the curriculum proposals for politicizing education. Teachers also have said the document is too long and will force students to memorize lists of names rather than learning to critically think.

How precisely does one develop “critical thinking” without a knowledge of the facts? It is hard to form a truly educated opinion concerning virtually any matter under consideration while remaining ignorant of the salient details. Teaching the facts and then exploring the meaning and implications of such “lists of names” may not be as simple as pushing a fact-free ideology. But it will necessitate at least teaching the students something.



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