

Texas board adopts new social studies curriculum



By APRIL CASTRO, Associated Press Writer
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AUSTIN, Texas – The Texas State Board of Education adopted a social studies and history curriculum Friday that amends or waters down the teaching of the civil rights movement, slavery, America's relationship with the U.N. and hundreds of other items.

The ideological debate over the guidelines, which drew intense scrutiny beyond Texas, will be used to teach some 4.8 million Texas students for the next 10 years.

The standards also will be used by textbook publishers who often develop materials for other states based on those approved in Texas, although teachers in the Lone Star state have latitude in deciding which material to teach.

The board took separate votes on standards for high schools and kindergarten through eighth grades. The final vote was 9-5 on each set of standards.

The debate has brought national attention, including testimony from educators, civil rights leaders and a former U.S. education secretary.

The ideological dispute contributed to the defeat of one of the board's most outspoken conservatives, Chairman Don McLeroy, in the March state Republican primary.

In final edits leading up to the vote, conservatives rejected language to modernize the classification of historic periods to B.C.E. and C.E. from the traditional B.C. and A.D. They also required that public school students in Texas evaluate efforts by global organizations such as the United Nations to undermine U.S. sovereignty.

McLeroy offered the amendment requiring students to evaluate efforts by global organizations including the U.N. to undermine U.S. sovereignty, saying they threatened individual liberty and freedom.

During the monthslong process of creating the guidelines, conservatives successfully strengthened the requirements on teaching the Judeo-Christian influences of the nation's Founding Fathers and attempted to water down rationale for the separation of church and state.

The standards will refer to the U.S. government as a "constitutional republic," rather than "democratic," and students will be required to study the decline in the value of the U.S. dollar, including the abandonment of the gold standard.

Conservatives say the Texas history curriculum has been unfairly skewed to the left after years of Democrats controlling the board.

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

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