

**STATE BOARD of EDUCATION  
PUBLIC HEARING – STATE TEXTBOOK ADOPTION 2002  
July 17, 2002**

**Chris Patterson, Director of Education Research**

**Purposes of Testimony:**

- Express appreciation for policy established by the Board that encourages public engagement in state textbook adoption – a policy that increases the academic soundness of textbooks;
- Thank the textbook publishers for their efforts to ensure accurate and academically comprehensive instructional materials;
- Introduce the review of social studies textbooks commissioned by the Texas Public Policy Foundation; and
- Introduce Dr. Christopher Hammons to describe findings of the review and answer questions about the factual errors identified by reviewers.

**Background:**

The Texas Public Policy Foundation has commissioned reviews of textbooks proposed for adoption by the State Board of Education since 1996. Over the past 6 years, the Foundation has published reviews for social studies, elementary and middle school mathematics, algebra, and science. The reviews were developed to help the State Board of Education identify errors and provide public schools with the information needed to make educated decisions about textbook selection.

**Overview of Social Studies Textbook Review:**

In the spring of 2002, the Foundation commissioned 16 experts to review 28 social studies textbooks submitted by publishers for the State Conforming List (meeting all state curriculum standards). Reviewers examined textbooks for grades 6, 7, and 8, as well as four high school social studies courses – World History, American History since Reconstruction, Economics, and American Government. The social studies review is unique because it represents:

- the first and only published review that determines how well the textbooks proposed for public schools meet state requirements for classroom learning – the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and the Texas Education Code Section 28.002. The Foundation’s review does not replicate efforts of the Texas Education Agency because the agency merely determines whether textbooks “cover” or mention the TEKS – agency reviews do not examine the extent or quality of covering state curriculum requirements;
- the only review to identify the additional information about history that is needed to ensure Texas public school textbooks furnish comprehensive, in-depth history

- education; and
- a joint effort of both classroom teachers and university scholars who have specific expertise in the subject matter and offer very different perspectives on the teaching of social studies. A listing of reviewers and a brief description of their credentials is appended.

The review is primarily devoted to examining academic content. Reviewers note particular textbook strengths and specific biases that undermine academic integrity. Reviewers also identify specific information that should be added to improve the textbooks. Examples of reviewer comments are appended.

Because the review is primarily designed to examine the breadth and depth of historical coverage, reviewers do not suggest excising or eliminating anything from textbooks. Because reviewers were selected on the basis of academic qualifications, the comments of the reviewers should not be interpreted to reflect the core principles on which the Texas Public Policy Foundation was founded – individual liberty, limited government, sound economics, and free enterprise. Because reviewer comments were not edited by the Foundation, the review reflects the independent efforts and judgments of reviewers who were guided by state requirements for textbook content and their own subject area expertise.

### **Overview of Textbook Review Findings:**

The entire review is published on the Foundation’s web site, <http://www.tppf.org>. Reviewers find that the textbooks generally meet state requirements for classroom learning and, overall, rate textbooks as satisfactory for all subjects. However, a few textbooks were rated as “poor” and others as “good.” No textbooks, however, were rated as “superior.” These ratings mean that consumers – schools, teachers, and parents – must become well informed about the textbooks and actively engaged in the process of selecting textbooks.

Although the finding of errors was not a primary charge to reviewers, 533 errors were identified. Although this number is relatively small, it is significant because State law requires that textbooks must be accurate to qualify for State Adoption. A listing of these errors has been filed with the Texas Education Agency.

In general, reviewers found that textbooks lack sufficient information about history; all textbooks require additional information to ensure accurate, comprehensive and objective classroom instruction about the history of our state, nation, and world. This finding is unsurprising, given that history is not taught in Texas public schools today. Social studies – a course that combines geography, economics, citizenship, culture, science, technology, sociology, and social skills with history – has replaced history as the required curriculum.

### **Next Steps for the Social Studies Textbook Review:**

Updates will be furnished to the State Board of Education about changes in the textbooks that publishers introduce as a result of the review. The electronic version of the review will be updated on our web site as changes are introduced. The

Foundation will disseminate the review to local school district textbook selection committees by December 2002.

### **Importance of the Social Studies Textbook Review:**

Historical illiteracy is growing commonplace in Texas and throughout our nation. Results of the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reveal that fewer than 15 percent of 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students have an adequate grasp of history. Less than 25 percent of 4<sup>th</sup> graders knew what transpired at the Boston Tea Party and 33 percent were unable to find their state on a map.

Results of the NAEP are consonant with a study published by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni in 2000. This study found that 4 of 5 college students were unable to pass a history test administered by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni. The test, primarily based on NAEP, was repeated by the University of Arizona earlier this year – with the same dismal results. Students know current events and popular culture, but less than 15 percent of students can identify the Father of the Constitution or the Gettysburg Address, and only 36 percent of students have heard of the Vietnam War.

It is clear that schools need to teach history – accurate and comprehensive facts about our state, nation and world – and textbooks must open the door to past events of our state, nation, and world.

The Foundation’s social studies textbook review can improve history education in public schools in Texas and throughout the nation by:

- identifying the social studies textbooks that currently furnish the most accurate and comprehensive studies of history;
- identifying the information that scholars and teachers believe publishers should include in textbooks;
- offering teachers supplemental information for classroom instruction;
- encouraging other individuals and organizations to review textbooks for public schools; and
- establishing a blueprint for future textbook reviews.

The ultimate goal of the review is, of course, to improve the teaching and learning of history. This goal is based on the premise that the operation of our democratic republic relies on citizens who are historically literate. As stated by Thomas Jefferson, *“If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects something that never was and never will be.”*

**This statement has been slightly modified from the original version presented to the board on July 17, 2002; a summary of research findings was included and the conclusion was expanded. A copy of the original testimony will be provided on request.**