



Vote Against HB 3979 (SB 2202)!

**HB 3979 would limit speech and engagement in Texas classrooms!
The bill is on the General House Calendar for Tuesday, May 4, 2021**

HB 3979 **would control and limit the free speech and ideas** of teachers, students and state agency employees. The prohibitions in the bill are broad and may be interpreted in ways that limit the learning, diversity and inclusion efforts already underway in schools across Texas.

HB 3979 **would cost school districts money** as they have to replace textbooks and other course materials that contain concepts prohibited by the law.

HB 3979 **would prohibit instruction and discussions about certain concepts related to race, sex, diversity and discrimination in social studies, history, government and civics courses.** This means that:

- **School districts will not be able to** support their teachers, staff and students to have conversations about important issues that impact our society,
- **Educators will not be able to** effectively teach their students and encourage participation and learning,
- **Students will not be able to** fully explore and engage in social studies, civics, current events and history, and
- **The State Board of Education will not be able to fully execute its duties,** including setting accurate social studies curriculum standards.

HB 3979 **would discourage teachers from discussing current events** in social studies courses. These discussions are a critical part of learning and social emotional wellness.

HB 3979 **would prohibit students from receiving course credit for participation in activities and organizations that encourage civic engagement,** including engagement in our public policymaking and legislative processes.

HB 3979 **would prohibit important schoolwide training for teachers, administrators, state agency employees, and school district or charter school staff** on race and gender diversity and inclusion practices related to social studies, history, government and similar subjects.

HB 3979 **would prohibit school districts, charter schools or state agencies from seeking private funding** to develop curriculum, training or materials for courses in the social studies curriculum.

Background

House Bill 3979 would severely limit the civic development of students as well as the ability of teachers and school leaders to guide student development in civic spheres. This hindrance would be in stark contrast to a core mission of the Texas public education system: ensuring all Texas children are able to fully participate *now and in the future* in the social, economic and educational opportunities of our state and nation.

Murky language that disallows districts or teachers from making “part of a course... political activism, lobbying or efforts to persuade members of the legislative or executive branch” can only be seen as an attempt to stifle civic development. Engagement in the political sphere – through activism, lobbying or contacting congressional representatives – is undoubtedly part of past, current and future experiences for all Texans.

Blockading student development in this way would intentionally prevent the development of future Texas leaders, many of whom will graduate from Texas schools. We should instead be celebrating the efforts of districts, teachers and students who are actively engaging in building a future Texas for all Texans.

HB 3979 creates footholds for the mischaracterization of diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. The impact of this mischaracterization, and of the passing of HB 3979, would be a decided step backward in efforts to promote equity throughout the state of Texas. Banning or limiting discussion on the role of race or sex in historical contexts and processes is a disservice to those who have been unduly targeted on the basis of their race or sex, both historically and in the present day. Additionally, banning these concepts is contrary to our current TEKS. We cannot turn away from the lived realities of racism and sexism as if doing so would clear their harms and histories. To stifle discussion in this way is to disjoint social studies curriculum – and thus student learning– from the very real injustices Texas communities have faced.

HB 3979 is at its worst an attempt to hinder free speech. A social studies or civics education that prohibits active engagement in civic discourse, action or activism is directly at odds with the goal of full democratic participation. Prohibition of discussion of race or sex in social studies contexts, given their centering in moments of injustice and attempts to rectify injustice, similarly limits students’ potential acumen in society.

If HB 3979 were enacted, our students would be without opportunity to either garner practical skills needed to engage in civic processes or learn requisite knowledge to make informed, equity-minded decisions. Proceeding in this way would be akin to teaching a child the physics of riding a bike without ever letting them ride one.

For questions, please contact TLEEC through Ana Ramón (ana.ramon@idra.org). The Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC) is a collaborative of organizations and individuals with the mission to improve the quality of public education for all children, with a focus on racial equity. The coalition convenes organizations and individuals who advocate in the interest of public school students at the local, state and national levels.

TLEEC Members & Affiliated Organizations

ARISE Adelante
American GI Forum, Miguel Hernandez Jr. Memorial Chapter
Breakthrough Central Texas
Children’s Defense Fund -Texas
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD)
Easterseals Central Texas
Every Texan
Houston Community Voices for Public Education
Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA)
McNeil Educational Foundation for Ecumenical Leadership
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
(MALDEF)
Mexican American School Board Members Association
(MASBA)

National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies
(NACCS) – Tejas Foco
Texas American Federation of Teachers
Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE)
Texas Association for Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE)
Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of
Commerce (TAMACC)
Texas Council for the Social Studies
Texas Hispanics Organized for Political Education (HOPE)
Texas League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Texas NAACP
Texas State Teachers Association
UnidosUS (formerly known as NCLR)