

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)

[View as Webpage](#)



Revived in the Senate! HB 3979, the “How-to Guide for Whitewashing History,” Likely to Become Law

San Antonio • May 30, 2021

On Friday night House Bill 3979, a harmful bill that prohibits Texas teachers and students from exploring important topics related to race, gender and justice was revived by Senate leadership shortly after it was blocked from passage in the House. The bill was brought back using a procedural maneuver that many believe may be unconstitutional. Senators who challenged the decision, pointing to clear limitations on when bills can pass out of the Senate, were effectively silenced. It now appears the bill will head to the Governor for passage into law.

“HB 3979 is a horrifying piece of legislation that was pushed through our legislative process with utter disregard for rules and procedure,” said IDRA Deputy Director of Advocacy Ana Ramón. “This bill is an attempt to control

important conversations happening across this country about racism, sexism, and a history of discrimination that shaped this country.”

Even as they called for strong civics education and a collective commitment to democratic ideals, many Texas Legislators refused to listen to the voices of Texans who opposed HB 3979.

The bill attempts to control students' and teachers' thoughts and conversations about current events and social justice issues in schools by discouraging honest discussions in Texas classrooms. It mischaracterizes the important and timely conversations about diversity and equity happening in schools, homes and workplaces across the country.

In allegiance to the bill's goal to censor civics discussions in schools, the process used by the Legislature to advance this bill also censored civic discussion about the bill itself. The legislature circumvented the normal process of giving adequate notice for the public to provide testimony, leading advocates to hold their own [virtual press conference](#) and [Facebook live hearing](#) so the voices of concerned families and educators could be heard.

“We refuse to be erased,” said IDRA President & CEO Celina Moreno. “The Legislature tried to deny students, teachers and our broad-based coalition the opportunity to participate in the policymaking process because they couldn't handle the truth about HB 3979.”

The bill will also prohibit schools from accessing private funding for certain curriculum development and materials and will bar students from participating in civics activities for course credit. An IDRA analysis found that the bill conflicts with many of the state's curriculum standards in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

The costs of HB 3979 are likely to be high for the state and school districts, considering the loss in private funding and costs to defend against probable litigation, replace instructional materials, settle contract disputes, and rework educator training.

[Ninety-five organizations opposed](#) HB 3979, including student coalitions, school districts, chambers of commerce, community groups, religious organizations and educator associations. [Over 200 historians](#) issued a letter in opposition to the bill stating, “A truthful accounting of history will allow

students to learn the lessons of the past to help build a more equal and inclusive future.” Several school districts threatened litigation against the bill, and legislators received over 14,600 emails urging them to oppose the bill.

House Bill 3979 threatens the classroom learning, educator professional development, and student engagement opportunities that are happening in schools across the state. This bill, like the similar ones being filed in other states, is an embarrassment to Texas. We harm our students – particularly our Black, Indigenous, Latino, and Asian American students – when we do not help them to engage in thoughtful and truthful conversations about the racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination we know impact their lives.

We are dismayed by this horrendous bill, but we remain committed to continuing our work to create safe and culturally-sustaining schools that serve all students.

Media contact: Christie L. Goodman, APR, IDRA Director of Communications, christie.goodman@idra.org, 210-444-1710

Learn More

[List of Organizations Opposing Texas HB 3979](#)

[Video from our Coalition Against Texas HB3979 Virtual Press Conference](#)

[Video from our Save Civics! Virtual Town Hall](#)

[Opposition letter by the American Historical Association](#)

[Letter by 229 historians against HB 3979](#)



Follow us on Twitter [@IDRAedu](#), and follow IDRA's Education Policy Fellows, [@IDRAeduFellows](#).



Follow us on [Facebook](#)



Follow us on [Instagram](#)

[Services](#)

[Research](#)

[Pressroom](#)

[About Us](#)

[Website](#)

5815 Callaghan Road, Suite 101



San Antonio, Texas 78228
Phone: 210-444-1710

Reach Out To Us



The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.

IDRA works hand-in-hand with hundreds of thousands of educators and families each year in communities and classrooms around the country. All our work rests on an unwavering commitment to creating self-renewing schools that value and promote the success of students of all backgrounds.