

History books becoming next fight in Texas schools

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The next ideological fight over new textbooks for Texas classrooms intensified Wednesday with critics lambasting history lessons that they say exaggerate the influence of Moses in American democracy and negatively portray Muslims.

The first new social studies [textbooks](#) in Texas public schools since 2002 are slated for approval in November. Making the final decision is the State Board of Education, which last year approved new curriculum that teaches children that the phrase "separation of church and state" is not in the U.S. Constitution.

Left-leaning groups that led heated opposition to those changes are now girding for a new fight over social studies textbooks, which the board will publicly discuss at a meeting next week.

"A number of textbook passages essentially reflect the ideological beliefs of politicians on the [state board](#) rather than sound scholarship and factual history," said Kathy Miller, president of the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund.

A passage in one textbook says, "Moses was a lawgiver and a great leader. Like the founders of the United States, he helped establish a legal system to govern his people. The Ten Commandments have been a guide and basis for many legal and moral systems throughout the world." Another disputed passage reads, "The Framers' political thinking was influenced by a Judeo-Christian religious heritage."

Others make sweeping generalizations about Islam and Muslims, according to the Miller's group, which teamed with university professors to review 43 textbooks that publishers submitted to the state for consideration last year.

Longtime board member David Bradley said he can't "fix unhappy" with Miller and others who have long battled the board. He said publishers have come a long way and praised the new textbooks for putting what he described as more emphasis on American exceptionalism.

"If they're complaining about the textbooks having an ideological bent, I'd have to think that they're pretty good," Bradley said.

Social and religious conservatives have long controlled the board, which has gotten attention in the past for efforts to deemphasize evolution in [science textbooks](#) and for requiring students to evaluate whether the United Nations undermines U.S. sovereignty.

At a July meeting, board members heard from dozens of conservative activists who claimed that new national guidelines for teaching high school Advanced Placement U.S. History contained liberal biases, with some likening it to government mind control.

The board can't block Texas students from taking the course or the new exam. But board member Ken Mercer said he will introduce a non-binding resolution at next week's meeting that will condemn the course as reflecting "a radically revisionist view of American history that is critical of American exceptionalism and emphasizes negative aspects of our nation's history while omitting or minimizing positive aspects."

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