

Association of Texas Professional Educators

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Supporting Your Freedom to TeachSM

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Discontent over social studies continues

AUSTIN – The following is a statement by Sam Spurlock, state president of the 115,000-plus member strong Association of Texas Professional Educators, regarding the contentious social studies debate during this week’s State Board of Education (SBOE) hearings:

“All eyes are once again on Texas public education, unfortunately for all the wrong reasons. The social studies standards debate has brought an unbelievable amount of public scrutiny to how Texas develops educational standards and curricula, and if the recent elections are any indicator of public sentiment, Texans aren’t happy.

“Even though the SBOE had the opportunity to use a set of standards developed by Texas experts and actual classroom professionals, certain members of the board have used their positions to promote their political ideologies. This essentially creates an environment where the board is focused more on indoctrination than education.

“Much like the debate over the science and English language arts revisions in previous years, this revision process has brought attention to how our state adopts new curriculum standards. Both the recent elections and attempts by the Legislature to curb the SBOE’s authority shows that Texans are losing faith in the board’s ability to act in the best interests of our children. The state board must use this opportunity to address public concerns and show that it’s above the political agendas of a few individuals.

“Although much of the debate involves the ideological divide, the larger concern teachers have aired is sheer length and breadth of the new standards. A teacher’s ability to adequately complete all the standards over the course of a regular school year will become much more difficult if the board adopts this massive increase in the number of standards, individuals and events included in the draft.

“Teaching students to understand the concepts and perspectives in a given historical period and its relation to future events requires more than just adding more to the list of names, dates and facts. Teachers and students need the time to delve deeper into these underlying concepts to ensure that students learn to think critically about all the implications of history and relate them to their own experience in order to be productive citizens and shape their own generations.”

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The 115,000-member Association of Texas Professional Educators is the largest educators' group in Texas and the largest nonunion educators' group nationwide. Its membership consists of classroom teachers, para-educators, administrators, college students and retired educators. ATPE is committed to advocating for better benefits for all educators, promoting a collaborative work environment and the right of educators to choose the association they feel represents their interests, and providing the best education possible for all Texas school children.