



ATPE Opposition to SB 2089

Regarding instructional materials

March 29, 2023

The **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)** offers the following information in opposition to **SB 2089** by Sen. Creighton.

The bill as currently written would make the teaching of social studies, particularly high school social studies, virtually unworkable. Instructional materials would be required to draw false equivalences regarding historical events and persons and present these subjects in a manner that contradicts the required Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum standards adopted by the State Board of Education (SBOE).

For example, teaching about the “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” is directed in US.9(E) of the 11th grade U.S. History TEKS. The standard states that students should: “discuss the impact of the writings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., such as his ‘I Have a Dream’ speech and ‘Letter from a Birmingham Jail’ on the Civil Rights Movement.” SB 2089 would prohibit a textbook from covering “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” due to it condoning “civil disorder, social strife, or disregard for the law.” This is just one example of many in which the bill’s language directly conflicts with the standards adopted by the SBOE.

The SBOE is tasked with reviewing instructional materials based in large part on their coverage of the TEKS. SB 2089 would place the SBOE in the awkward position of having to choose between rejecting instructional materials that comply with the TEKS or approving instructional materials that do not comply. To the extent legislators would like to see changes in instructional content, ATPE believes that process should be left to the elected SBOE through the TEKS review and revision process.

Additionally, ATPE is concerned SB 2089 would have a chilling effect by making teachers afraid to teach “controversial” topics, such as the history of civil rights, for fear of violating the law. This would water down content and weaken classroom autonomy. The ATPE Legislative Program, which was unanimously adopted by members of the 2022 ATPE House of Delegates, states the following:

“ATPE supports comprehensive instruction in all grade levels that prepares Texas students for success throughout their public school years as well as in post-secondary and career opportunities.”

The State Board of Education is the duly elected body charged by voters to approve instructional materials and write the curriculum standards teachers are responsible for teaching. The SBOE, in consultation with educators, parents, and other stakeholders, should be the main body directing what is being taught in Texas.

For these reasons, we urge you to **OPPOSE SB 2089**. For additional information, contact ATPE Governmental Relations at (800) 777-2873 or government@atpe.org.

The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) has been a strong voice for Texas educators since 1980. It is the leading educators' association in Texas with 90,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, future, retired and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for 5 million public schoolchildren. ATPE is the ally and the voice of Texas public school educators.