TEXAS’ TEXTBOOK TROUBLES

HOW A NEO-CONFEDERATE DENTIST CHANGED THE
U.S. HISTORY CURRICULUM

R. M. (Roderik) Krooneman
1460412
Verlengde Lodewijkstraat 158
9723 AJ Groningen
06-13845296
Supervisor: Dr. M. (Maarten) Zwiers
Subject
The 2010 Texas TEKS revision and neo-Confederate dogma.

Abstract
“Texas’ Textbook Troubles” is a thesis written for the master’s degree program at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. The subject of this thesis is the revision of the social studies Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) by the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) during the Spring of 2010. The central question of this thesis is what circumstances enabled Don McLeroy to inject neo-Confederate dogma into the U.S. history curriculum in post-Jim Crow Texas during the Social Studies TEKS revision of 2010. This question is answered through an examination of the minutes of the SBOE meetings, a biographical enquiry into the leader of the conservative bloc of the SBOE, Don McLeroy, and an analysis of the main tenets of Neo-Confederate dogma. In order to establish a workable definition of neo-Confederate dogma, three distinct elements of neo-Confederate ideology are formulated.

Keywords
Foreword

The first time I heard about Don McLeroy or the social studies TEKS revision of 2010 was during my preliminary research for a research seminar for my Master’s degree called: “The Abuse of History” by prof. dr. Antoon de Baets. As one of the first assignments for the seminar, all students were asked to choose a subject surrounding the abusive use of history. During my search for a suitable subject, I stumbled upon the subject of history textbooks. I recalled seeing editions of the Today Show and the Colbert Report and reading articles online about a peculiar situation somewhere in the United States where creationists demanded that publishers add a sticker in biology textbooks stating that evolution “is a theory not a fact”. I wondered if a similar controversy existed surrounding history textbooks and I found that there was.

From then on, I grew more and more interested in the peculiarities of U.S. history curriculum standards. During my research, I followed an internship at an educational textbook publisher which only emboldened my interest in the development of history curriculum and textbooks. Still, my internship experience and many hours of research before typing the first word of this thesis did not make the Texas textbook adoption process any less controversial.
# Table of content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Neo-Confederate Ideology</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Origins</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 The politics of U.S. history</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Modern neo-Confederate movements</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 The suburbanization of neo-Confederate politics</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: The Little Dentist That Could</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Education and religious background</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Politics</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Don McIeroy and the Texas State Board of Education</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Texas textbook tradition</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: The 2010 Social Studies TEKS Revisions</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 The matter of TEKS revisions</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 The Review Committee</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 The expert reviewer</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 The State Board of Education</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Neo-Confederate Ideology in the 2010 TEKS Revision</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Depreciation of slavery as the cause of the Civil War</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Accentuation of Christian and republican values</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Whitewashing of history</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 The importance of Texas</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: List of used abbreviations</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Timeline</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

“For the last two years, these so-called experts have taken over our national government. Well, I disagree with those experts. Somebody’s got to stand up to experts.”

— Don McLeroy

For the last decades, Americans have been clashing over the contents of high school history textbooks. This was particularly the case in Texas, where adopted textbooks prolonged their longevity in other states. Because of its sizeable market for textbooks, publishers tended to gear their products to Texas’ measures. Recently, in 2010, the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE), which was responsible for such textbooks, revised its social studies curriculum or “Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills” (TEKS). The revision, amongst other equally controversial proposals, sought to remove Enlightenment philosopher Thomas Jefferson from a list of American key thinkers, replace any mention of the slave trade with “Atlantic triangular trade” and to teach children that slavery was a “side issue” in the Civil War.  

The news of the planned revision quickly sparked national attention from media outlets across the political spectrum, including Fox News, the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, CNN, The New York Times, and Comedy Central. Eventually, it even garnered international

1 The Revisionaries, DVD, Directed by Scott Thurman (New York: Kino Lorber, 2012), [1:15:10-1:17:30].
press attention from reporters from The Guardian and the Al Jazeera network. In the Netherlands, the 2010 TEKS revision did not get that much attention outside of a single opinion piece in a newspaper and the delayed edition of The Daily Show on Comedy Central. Looking back, much of the coverage of the events surrounding the 2010 TEKS revision seem sensational without giving much attention to the broader context.

The 2010 Texas Social Studies TEKS revision was perhaps exemplary of a bigger problem concerning education in the United States. Since the 1960s, a conservative bloc has led campaigns against any educational textbook that did not represent Christian and conservative values and principles. In its view, American textbooks have for a long time been tainted with secular, liberal bias.

The first champions of this movement were “The Gablers”. In the 1960s, Norma and Mel Gabler were the first to discover that ordinary Texans could weigh in on textbook contents through a citizen-review process. Whenever textbooks were up for revision, the Gablers would be there to propose long lists of amendments. By 1980, they had gathered such an influence that the SBOE made publishers adopt hundreds of changes proposed by the Gablers. The Republican Party soon saw the political potential in controlling the Texas SBOE and ran a merciless campaign promoting hardline conservatives and smearing the reputation of any Democratic candidate that would oppose them. The candidates for this religious right-wing bloc were chosen for their political and religious conviction, not for their educational merit. It is perhaps no wonder then that a young earth creationist lacking any experience in education, would be elected as member of the SBOE and eventually lead it.

Out of this right-wing bloc of the SBOE, many considered Don McLeroy to be the most prominent and the de facto leader. Don McLeroy, a dentist by profession, emerged as the most visible leader of the influential conservative voting bloc in the SBOE. He was first elected to the SBOE in 1998 and elected as chair of the SBOE in 2007.

At first glance, McLeroy’s chairmanship may not seem that peculiar. Members of the SBOE are chosen via partisan elections and represent single-member districts for four-year

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terms. More bizarre however, are McLeroy’s personal beliefs and actions during this period. During his time on the SBOE, Don McLeroy has been accused of minimizing slavery as the root cause of the Civil War, emphasizing Christian values, conservative ideas and the free market economy, and generally whitewashing U.S. history. According to independent researcher Edward Sebesta, the Texas SBOE “instilled in the minds of Texas children an neo-Confederate consciousness that will greatly enable and assist the neo-Confederate movement.” In the same chapter, Sebesta directly accuses the right-wing bloc of the Texas SBOE of “the injection of neo-Confederate ideology in to the standards adopted in 2010.”

How did Don McLeroy come into a position where he could alter an entire nation’s history curriculum in this manner and at this time? In the years following the end of World War II, cities in Texas became centers of activism for equal rights in the South. While segregation laws between whites and African Americans did not extend to Hispanic Texans, de facto segregation remained strong in Texas which caused most Latinos at the time to live in segregated neighborhoods and attend segregated schools. The fight against segregation in Texas brought African Americans and Texas’ large Latino community together which resulted in an uniquely energetic opposition to Texas’ Jim Crow policies.

Despite of this spirited defiance of Jim Crow and the growing power of Texas’ minority population, neo-Confederate dogma still survived. Seven years after the last Civil Rights Act was passed, the Texas electorate chose a neo-Confederate dentist to determine what should be taught in Texas’ classrooms. This all leads to the main question of this thesis: “What circumstances made it possible for Don McLeroy to inject neo-Confederate dogma into the U.S. history curriculum in post-Jim Crow Texas?”

Because of the recentness of the events of the 2010 TEKS revision, not much has been written on the subject in the sense of historical work. A recent examination of these events was compiled by Keith Erikson in Politics and the History Curriculum. In this compilation of essays, accounts are given surrounding the events during the 2010 TEKS

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10 Erikson, Politics and the History Curriculum.
revision. Contributors include professors and independent researchers, many of whom were either directly or indirectly involved in these events. Erikson himself is an assistant professor of history at the University of Texas and director of the Center for History Teaching and Learning. He organized the TEKS Watch information website that monitored media coverage during the events.\footnote{Erikson, \textit{Politics and the History Curriculum}, 231.}

Erikson offers a comprehensive examination of the issues surrounding the 2010 TEKS revision and the general controversy over history standards in Texas and across the nation but does not attempt to give an historical analysis of the events or the major actors that played their parts in this process. One obvious goal of this thesis would be to delve deeper into the events and explore the background and motive of one of the major players within the debate. Don McLeroy’s character provides an excellent example because of his public prominence during the 2010 TEKS revision and the abundance of sources detailing his actions during this period from the hands of scholars, the media and Don McLeroy himself. Furthermore, as a suburban dentist, Don McLeroy can be considered as representative of a broader development in post-Jim Crow southern suburban society.

Even though the events of the 2010 TEKS revision are recent, political influence on history textbooks existed far before Don McLeroy first took his seat at the Texas SBOE. Ever since the 1890s, neo-Confederate white southerners have sought to change U.S. history textbooks to alter the nation’s perspective on events in its past.\footnote{Joseph Moreau, \textit{Schoolbook Nation: Conflicts Over American History Textbooks from the Civil War to the Present} (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 5.} Any early example of an encompassing examination of U.S. history textbooks is \textit{The Historian’s Contribution to Anglo-American Misunderstanding} by Ray Allen Billington. In this report of the Committee on National Bias in Anglo-American History Textbooks, Billington reveals myopia, carelessness and even falsification by authors of U.S. history textbooks.\footnote{Ray Allen Billington, \textit{Historian’s Contribution to Anglo-American Misunderstanding} (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge & Kegan Paul PLC, 1966).}

Perhaps the most complete analysis of the problems surrounding U.S. history textbooks is written by professor of sociology James Loewen. Loewen spent two years examining the twelve leading U.S. high school history textbooks. His findings are written down in \textit{Lies Me Teacher Told Me}. In this book Loewen does not only explore the historical fallacies taught in U.S. history textbooks, but also examines the process and the
consequences of the way these books reach the high school classroom. Even though these earlier studies provide a comprehensive view on the 2010 TEKS revision and controversies surrounding U.S. history textbooks in general, the potential connection, as suggested by Sebesta’s accusation, between the neo-Confederate movement and the controversy surrounding the 2010 TEKS revision in particular has never been studied. Also, within current historiography there has been little to no attention to schoolboards or one of its members in particular. This thesis seeks to add to the historiography concerning political influence on U.S. history textbooks by assessing the debate on earlier examples of textbook controversies and stack these perspectives against the 2010 TEKS revision and the actions of Don McLeroy as member of the Texas SBOE during these events. Because of the unfamiliarity with the process of Texas textbook revisions of laymen and scholars alike, a good portion of this thesis will be explaining this process and the political agencies that surround it. Still, the core of this thesis will be a biographical approach centering around Don McLeroy as exemplary of a broader phenomenon within the suburbs in post-Jim Crow South.

To successfully find an answer as to what circumstances made it possible for Don McLeroy to inject neo-Confederate dogma into the U.S. history curriculum, a relation must be established between Don McLeroy’s personal beliefs, his efforts during the 2010 SBOE Social Studies TEKS revision and the tenets of neo-Confederate dogma. But first, a historical background of traditional and modern neo-Confederate movements and their core tenets is needed.

In the first chapter of this thesis, the subject of neo-Confederate dogma will be explained. Many historians have written about the origins, tenets and activities of neo-Confederates and neo-Confederate organizations. To examine the system neo-Confederate beliefs, literature by historians like James McPherson, James Loewen, and Edward Sebesta will be studied. James McPherson is an American Civil War historian and Professor Emeritus at Princeton University and is often credited with first use of the term neo-Confederate. As such, his chapter “Long Legged Yankee Lies” in Alice Fah’s and Joan Woah’s The Memory of Civil War in American Culture cannot be ignored in this study. Edward Sebesta is an independent researcher based in Dallas, Texas and is the editor of Neo-Confederacy: A

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Critical Introduction and The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader. The first is a collection of essays concerning the origins, the development and the practices of neo-Confederacy, the second is a compilation of primary sources documenting the perspectives of the neo-Confederate movement. Combined, these books provide a thorough study of neo-Confederate dogma and as such, an indispensable source of information in any study on that subject. To substantiate the claims by these historians, belief statements by conservative organizations like the Eagle Forum, the League of the South and the Tea Party will be used. At the end of the chapter, the three core elements of modern neo-Confederate movements will be defined: the depreciating of slavery as the root cause of the Civil War, the accentuation of Christian and republican values in education, and the general whitewashing of history.

In the same chapter the relation between history textbooks and politics in the United States and the historical importance of the events will be clarified. In order to present an adequate description of this background, literature concerning earlier examples of “Textbook Battles” in the United States will be studied. The historical importance of these events will become apparent as this background is presented.

In the last paragraph of the first chapter, the white backlash against the civil rights movement will be examined. My assertion is that Don McLeroy’s life mirrors a broader development in southern suburbia. These developments will therefore be considered before moving on to the live and times of our protagonist. To better understand this white backlash against civil rights, progressive movements and the spirit of the 1960s, literature by historians Lisa McGirr, Kevin Kruse and Matthew Lassiter will be used. Professor of History Lisa McGirr’s 2001 book, Suburban Warriors, addresses the white conservative movement’s deep roots in California. In this book, McGirr finds that the white backlash against the civil rights movement constituted an ongoing campaign that was overshadowed by the left wing’s more colorful actions and victories in that same time.15 Kevin Kruse is Professor of History at Princeton University. Kruse’s study of Atlantan suburban culture, White Flight, analyzes the civil rights movement and white backlash in Atlanta, Georgia.16 Like McGirr in California, Kruse sees the white backlash against the civil rights movement as deeply rooted

in an ongoing conservative movement in the suburbs of Atlanta. Associate Professor of History Matthew Lassiter’s *Silent Majority* studies suburban white resistance to the forced integration that was threatening the tranquility of their southern way of life.17

As the core of this essay is the person of Don McLeroy’s and position and actions within the SBOE, the second chapter will present a short biography of our main protagonist. This brief biography will shed light on the life and times of Don McLeroy and his religious and political beliefs. As distinguished professor Kenneth S. Greenberg states, biography, when done well, “can offer the opportunity for synthesis; a world can manifest itself in the life of a person.”18 Following Greenberg’s paradigm, the story of Don McLeroy will be presented as exemplary of a broader phenomenon; the ongoing campaign in southern suburbia to preserve neo-Confederate values.

My assertion that Don McLeroy is the de facto leader of a Religious Right bloc within the board will be based on how historians and the media present Don McLeroy’s role within the SBOE as well as how Don McLeroy himself viewed his period on the board. Sources concerning the pivotal role of Don McLeroy will be found in reports on the events, Don McLeroy’s media appearances and his personal website, which contains numerous interviews, editorials and essays. From this last source, a brief profile can be composed of Don McLeroy and his educational, religious, and political background.

In the third chapter, the matter of TEKS revisions will be explored. For anyone unfamiliar with Texas educational bureaucracy, the process of adopting a new TEKS may seem dauntingly complex. Therefore, a clear overview of the stages of the process and all actors involved must be presented before any question can be answered. To do this, the Texas Education Code and the Texas Administrative Code must be examined as well as reports concerning the procedures by the Texas Education Agency and the SBOE in 2010 specifically. In the same chapter, reports of various committee members will be examined.

Finally, the presence of neo-Confederate ideology in the 2010 Social Studies TEKS revision by the SBOE will be examined. Fortunately, the meeting minutes of the 2010 Social Studies TEKS revision by the SBOE are available online and openly accessible. By contrasting the meeting minutes and the final draft of the TEKS against the three core elements of

modern-Confederate ideology as defined in the first chapter, an argument can be formulated as to which extent the efforts of Don McLeroy can constitute an injection of neo-Confederate dogma into the U.S. history curriculum.

Following this structure, both the theory concerning neo-Confederate ideology and TEKS revisions will be addressed while still maintaining a biographical approach to the person of Don McLeroy as the core of this thesis. By opening with the broader context of neo-Confederate ideology, then zooming in on Don McLeroy and finally zooming out again to the broader events of the 2010 TEKS revision, this thesis strives to present a clear picture of these complex matters.

My hypothesis is that Don McLeroy’s efforts within the Texas SBOE during the Social Studies TEKS revision of 2010 correspond with the core tenets of neo-Confederate ideology, that Don McLeroy actively injected this dogma into the Social Studies TEKS and that this was made possible by a combination of a powerful political force behind McLeroy to counteract liberal influence on the SBOE and still lingering segregationist worldviews in the post-segregationist society of Texas.
CHAPTER 1

Neo-Confederate Ideology

“We stand for our own sublime cultural inheritance and seek to separate ourselves from the cultural rot that is American culture.”

- League of the South Core Beliefs Statement

1.1 Origins

This paragraph will examine the birth of a “traditional” neo-Confederate movement after the Civil War and its development. For me, the “traditional” neo-Confederate movement ends with their resistance to the civil rights movement during the 1960s. What I consider the “modern” neo-Confederate movement starts with the founding of the Eagle Forum in 1972 and will be discussed in the next paragraph.

After the Civil War, most Confederates found it hard to admit they had been wrong about African Americans after having fought for slavery. For the most part though, Southerners admitted that slavery was not a viable option anymore. The Civil War left the Southerners with a vastly altered economic and social system. According to James Loewen, many Southerners then sought to reconcile their motivation for going to war with this altered worldview. For them, instead of slavery, the war was now thought to defend their homes and livelihoods from a Northern invasion. During the decades after General Lee’s surrender at the Appomattox, a public memory was constructed that placed the Confederacy, the South and the Southerners in the best possible light. This construction of this alternative memory became known as “Lost Cause” ideology, a term first popularized by

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historian Edward Pollard who in 1866 renamed the Confederacy “the Lost Cause” in a book with the same title.\(^\text{21}\)

Proponents of the Lost Cause ideology sought to address the institution of slavery, the constitutionality of secession, the causes of the Civil War and ultimately the reasons for the South’s defeat. The Lost Cause ideology was fueled by memoirs, speeches, ceremonies artwork and literature. Edward Pollard, in his second book *The Lost Cause Regained*, writes that the “true cause” of the Civil War for the South has not yet been lost. For Pollard, this true cause of the Civil War for the South was to uphold white supremacy as a “barrier against a contention and war of races”. According to Pollard, this was the greatest value of slavery.\(^\text{22}\) Documents and speeches by former Confederate leaders show the same focus on white superiority and the Lost Cause of the Civil War. Gradually, these ex-Confederates came to dominate Southern discourse about the reasons for secession and racial relations. Slowly but surely, those who believed in white supremacy overthrew the postbellum interracial Republican administrations of the South.\(^\text{23}\)

During the 1870s, ex-Confederates found themselves less able to admit they had been wrong about racial relations now that they were dominating African Americans politically. They further rejected the idea that they had seceded and fought the Civil War in order to protect the institution of slavery. The North not honoring the U.S. Constitution became the main reason for secession and in many neo-Confederate documents, the Civil War came to be known as “The War of Northern Aggression”.\(^\text{24}\)

From the 1890s on, proponents of the Lost Cause in the South began to legalize their ideology. Washington’s unwillingness to meddle in Southern affairs after the Civil War enabled Lost Cause politicians and officials to pass laws and policies restricting African Americans’ civil rights and to rewrite the history of the South and how it was taught in southern classrooms. It is in the context of this effort to rewrite southern history in which the term “neo-Confederate” was first used.\(^\text{25}\) In this sense, neo-Confederate ideology finds


\(^{24}\) John Coski, “The War Between the Names”, *North & South* 8, no. 7 (2006), 64.

its origin in the Lost Cause of the Confederacy but cannot be considered the same thing. The Lost
Cause ideology exclusively stresses the constitutionality of secession and the reasons for the defeat of the Confederacy.\textsuperscript{26} Neo-Confederate ideology on the other hand, while having its roots in Lost Cause ideology, is not as immediately connected to the memory of the Civil War. Neo-confederate ideology encompasses economics, politics, the preservation of traditional southern culture and how these topics are taught in southern classrooms.\textsuperscript{27}

1.2 \textit{The politics of U.S. history}

For many generations, the United States has been involved in political squabbles about what kind of history should be taught in American classrooms. Although earlier examples can be found, the first full-blown American “History War” began in the aftermath of the American Revolution. Political leaders were already in disagreement over what the Revolution meant for the United States even before the last shot was fired. John Adams was convinced that the history of the Revolution would be “one continued lie from one end to the other”.\textsuperscript{28} The character, legacies, and meaning of the Revolution would be the focus of a heated battle that continued throughout the careers of the Founding Fathers.

A later example of political dispute about U.S. history can be found in the 1840s. At the height of the abolitionist movement, many Southerners reviled “the wandering schincendiary Yankee schoolmaster with his incendiary school books”.\textsuperscript{29} Southerners saw the abolitionist movement as a threat to their since long adopted argument that slavery was a morally defensible economic system. In their view, the history books created in the North contained unacceptable revised history.\textsuperscript{30}

After the Civil War, publishers tried to produce history textbooks that adhered to both visions of the Civil War by “leaving the reader to his own conclusion as to the right or wrong of it,” as the president of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a fraternal

\textsuperscript{26} Gallagher and Nolan, \textit{The Myth of the Lost Cause}, 1.
\textsuperscript{27} Loewen and Sebesta, \textit{The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader}, 16.
\textsuperscript{30} Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn, \textit{History On Trial}, 19.
organization composed of veterans of the Northern Army, sourly lamented.\textsuperscript{31} The GAR did not accept any infringement on their vision on the Civil War and the reasons why it was fought. In 1880, the GAR charged that Southern textbooks unjustly defiled Abraham Lincoln as a warmonger, justified secession, and depicted Confederate political and military leaders as acting out of selfless patriotism.\textsuperscript{32} For decades, students from North and South would discover that they had been taught wildly different stories about the events and causes of the Civil War.\textsuperscript{33}

In 1895, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) was founded with the principle motive of countering “false history”, which taught Southern schoolchildren that their fathers were not only rebels but also guilty of “every crime enumerated in the decalogue”.\textsuperscript{34} The UDC and other neo-Confederate organizations formed “Historical Committees” with the purpose to “select and designate such truthful and proper history of the United States, to be used in public and private schools in the South”.\textsuperscript{35} In general, these historical committees pushed literature that advocated three main themes a Southern textbook should adhere to: that secession was not a rebellion but a legal exercise of state sovereignty, that Confederate soldiers fought valiantly and won most battles against tremendous odds but were finally worn down by overwhelming numbers and recourses, and that the South did not fight for slavery but for self-government.\textsuperscript{36}

In the 1940s, right-wing historians attempted to retell the history of American capitalism. In their view, liberal historians had brought the “brilliant and near perfect system” of the U.S. economy and capitalism in a negative light. Their reaction was to eliminate the word capitalism itself from the discussion entirely. Instead, they proposed to use the term “free market” and retell U.S. economic history as the history of the free enterprise system. Just as the history of the Founding Fathers before, politicians utilized this revised version of U.S. history to accommodate their political agendas.

During the civil rights movement, many Southern politicians resented textbooks that

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{31}{Stuart McConnell, \textit{Glorious Contentment: the Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900 (Civil War America)}, Reprint ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 226.}
\footnotetext{32}{Idem, 224-225.}
\footnotetext{33}{Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn, \textit{History On Trial}, 20.}
\footnotetext{34}{McPherson, “Long Legged Yankee Lies”, 67.}
\footnotetext{35}{United Confederate Veterans, \textit{Minutes of the third annual meeting and reunion of the Confederate Veterans} (1890) 99. http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=ucvminutes [Consulted on: March 9, 2016]}
\footnotetext{36}{McPherson, “Long Legged Yankee Lies”, 68.}
\end{footnotes}
included concepts of multiculturalism and egalitarianism. In December 1974, the West Virginia SBOE directed the Textbook Committees from all school districts to select new school materials that accurately portray ethnic group and minority contributions to U.S. history. On March 12, the Textbook Committee of Kanawha County recommended 325 textbooks for adoption by the board. As reports of the soon to be adopted textbooks containing multiculturalism reached the community, tension began to rise in the suburbs of Kanawha County. Kitchen-table activists soon united all those who opposed the textbooks. The grumbling soon reached the point where the West Virginia SBOE decided to schedule a meeting to explain their textbook selections.\textsuperscript{37}

The opponents of the new textbooks found an ally in SBOE member Alice Moore. During a public meeting on May 23, she charged that the proposed textbooks were “filthy, disgusting trash, unpatriotic and unduly favoring blacks.”\textsuperscript{38} After the meeting, Alice Moore began speaking out publicly against the books. She appeared on television, wrote to local newspapers and read passages from the challenged textbooks in churches and community centers.\textsuperscript{39}

On June 27, the West Virginia SBOE held another public meeting, this time before an audience of more than 1,000 people. The room was so crowded in fact, that the gathered crow began overflowing into the hallways and into the pouring rain outside. New organization opposing the new textbooks began to form. The Christian-American Parents (CAP) and the Concerned Citizens (CC) sponsored rallies, protest, picketing, letter-writing campaigns and newspaper advertising.\textsuperscript{40}

As a result of the efforts of Alice Moore and these new anti-textbook organizations, the West Virginia SBOE announced on September 11 that they were withdrawing the offending textbooks from the schools in order to allow for a thirty-day review by a committee of citizens selected by board members. For the anti-textbook organizations, this “compromise” was not enough. At a rally at the Kanawha ballpark, the Reverend Marvin Horan called for a boycott of all public schools. The boycott soon reached its boiling point, as thousands of miners, bus drivers and trucking forces joined the cause. By September,


\textsuperscript{38} Foerstel, \textit{Banned in the U.S.A.}, 2.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibidem, 2-3.
violence erupted on the streets and two men were wounded by gunfire at a picket line. During the boycott, schools were bombed, vandalized and attacked with gunfire. Reverend Horan was later sentenced to three years in prison for a conspiracy to bomb two elementary schools.41

Ever since the American Revolution, Americans thus have never unanimously agreed on a single unified version of their national history. Heroes and villains, mistakes and successes in U.S. history are vigorously debated. During this ongoing disjointed debate, the content of U.S. history textbook became highly politicized. Political ideologues, both conservative and liberal but mostly conservative, held that the U.S. history curriculum could and should be reinvented according to the political needs of the moment. All history that challenged their ideals and own interpretation of history should be erased or forgotten. According to professor of history Frits Fischer, what is most frightening about these attempts to revise U.S. history is making these new stories about the past into the “truth” for American schoolchildren.42

After president Harry S. Truman desegregated the U.S. military forces in 1948, neo-Confederates united once again and formed the Dixiecrat Party. At their rallies and conventions, followers of the Dixiecrat Party waved the infamous Confederate battle flag to emphasize their neo-Confederate identity.43

During the decades that followed, neo-Confederates opposed the civil rights movement. They saw their struggle against racial equality as a direct repetition of their earlier efforts during Reconstruction. Again, neo-Confederates strived to control Southern state governments and succeeded. This allowed them to again make efforts to rewrite history about the South’s past. They viewed the struggle against the civil rights movement as a “battle for the principles of the Confederacy”; both being, according to neo-Confederates, a struggle for states’ rights.44

The efforts to rewrite Southern history and to reconstruct the South’s image of itself during and after the events of the Civil War form the origins of modern neo-Confederate ideology. From its inception from ex-Confederate white supremacists, the neo-Confederate

41 Foerstel, Banned in the U.S.A., 5.
44 Loewen and Sebesta, The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader, 18.
ideology has sought to control politics and the writing of history in the South.

1.3 Modern neo-Confederate movements

In March 1972, the U.S. Senate passed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The ERA was an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that guaranteed equal rights for women. Ever since the ERA was first brought to Congress in 1923, the ERA had been highly controversial and had always been met with great resistance from conservatives. In order to oppose the ratification of the ERA by individual states, conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly created a national network called “Stop ERA”. Schlafly’s network quickly attracted followers. In 1975, Schlafly changed to name of Stop ERA to the Eagle Forum. Schlafly single-handedly had created a movement that at the time counted 50,000 members.45

From her home in Illinois, Schlafly supervised aides that monitored legislation in all states. Her constant pressure on politicians and legislators, diligent lobbying, and mass mailing of conservative pamphlets caught many liberals off-guard. Aside from women’s rights, the Eagle Forum strongly opposed multiculturalism, civil rights for homosexuals and abortion-rights, which according to them were in direct opposition to traditional family-values.46

Traditional neo-Confederates that opposed the civil rights movement in the 1960s now joined the Eagle Forum in their fight against the feminist and gay movement for equal rights. Neo-Confederates saw feminism, gay rights, and multiculturalism as destructive to social order and the traditional American way of life.47

The anti-abortion and anti-gay agenda of the Eagle Forum also attracted support from church groups. Traditionally, Christian churches avoided getting too close to politics but around the 1970s, as traditional Christian family-values came under fire from gay- and equal-rights activists, church groups began to get involved. This coalescence of Christianity with traditional neo-Confederate movements can be seen as the inception of the modern neo-Confederate movements. In addition to the traditional tenets of neo-Confederate

movements like regarding states’ rights as the root cause of the Civil War, and the general whitewashing of history, these modern movements hold Christian values to be the core of American society and downplay the separation of church and state as the founding principle of the United States. After this fusion of the Christian right and early neo-Confederate movements, three distinct elements of neo-Confederate ideology can be identified: first, the depreciating of slavery as the root cause of the Civil War. Secondly, the accentuation of Christian and republican values in education. And finally, the general whitewashing of history.

In this view, one might think that the ideology of modern neo-Confederate movements is the same as the political philosophy of U.S. conservatism. This would however be a gross oversimplification of both political ideas. Neo-Confederate movements, as defined above, are exclusively addressing national issues and stress the importance of traditional Southern values within U.S. borders, whereas conservatives also embrace aggressive nation-building abroad and the exportation of democracy as a fundamental foreign policy. In this light, the 43rd U.S. president George W. Bush can be seen as (neo)conservative, but not as neo-Confederate.\(^\text{48}\) In summary, pretty much all neo-Confederate movements can be considered conservative, but not all conservative movements can be considered neo-Confederate.

A more recent example of a modern neo-Confederate movement was the League of the South. On 29 October 1995, Thomas Flemming and dr. Michael Hill published the New Dixie Manifesto.\(^\text{49}\) In the New Dixie Manifesto, Flemming and Hill asserted that secession from the U.S. was necessary and that a new Confederation of Southern States had to be formed around the following concepts: removal of all federal laws, opposition to “forced” desegregation, Christian-centered government, the right to display confederate symbols, and local control.\(^\text{50}\) Hill, was a history instructor at the University of Alabama at the time. He argued that the federal government had unconstitutionally usurped the political power of the states.\(^\text{51}\) It was the gunshot that started a new nationalist organization, the Southern


\(^{50}\) Ibidem.

League. Later the Southern League was renamed League of the South.

The New Dixie Manifesto was a call to arms in which a “new group of Southerners” was encouraged to stand up and take control of their own governments, their own institutions, their own culture, their own communities and to shed the liberal, multicultural, continental empire, ruled from Washington by federal agencies and under the thumb of the federal judiciary.\(^{52}\) On the education system, the New Dixie Manifesto states:

“On the state level, self-government should be restored to the towns and communities that make up the states. This means an end, not only to federal interference, but to state interference in local government and local schools. Under federal and state mandates, American schools have become the joke of the civilized world, and in the guise of helping black children, we have destroyed educational opportunities for children of all races. It is time to give the schools back to the parents.”\(^{53}\)

The explicit mention of schools, and only schools next to local government seem to betray a focus on the Southern educational system of the League of the South in their mission. This focus on education by the League of the South is important when regarding this organization as neo-Confederate. If the League of the South lacked this focus, it could just as well be regarded as advocating Lost Cause ideology instead of being labeled as neo-Confederate.

Throughout the 1990s the League of the South grew. In 2003, Hill stated that membership of the League of the South had 15,000 members. But as membership grew, so did the number of members with association to hate groups like the neo-Nazi National Alliance and the Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC) which increased the League of the South’s extremism.\(^{54}\) The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) describes the League of the South as a “neo-Confederate hate group that advocates for a second Southern secession and a society dominated by “European Americans” and the “ideological core” of neo-Confederate ideology. According to the League of the South, “the Civil War had almost

\(^{52}\) Hill and Fleming, *New Dixie Manifesto*.  
\(^{53}\) Ibidem.  
nothing to do with slavery”. In the SPCL’s Intelligence Report, editor Mark Potok likens the efforts by the League of the South to rewrite U.S. history to deniers of the Holocaust. He continues:

“The danger is that the toxic views of Michael Hill and his co-religionists, increasingly public as the neo-Confederate movement grows, will come to be seen as just another interpretation of history. In reality, they are plainly false, and their propagation is merely the latest attack on American democracy.”

By the end of the 1990s, the League of the South had chapters in at least fifteen states and became more active in politics. The League of the South began actively supporting political candidates who in its view represent the group’s core beliefs. In 1998 the League of the South endorsed Rick Perry in his run for lieutenant governor of Texas. On their website, Perry was described as member of the Sons of the Confederate Veterans and as a candidate that would provide a boost for the passing of a bill proclaiming April as “Confederate History and Heritage month”. A few months after Rick Perry won the election, the Texas legislator did just that.

The belief that states’ rights was the main reason for the Civil War has for generations been at the core of neo-Confederate ideology. This is the most important reason for maintaining the label of “neo-Confederate”. It solidifies the movement’s roots within the Lost Cause ideology and underscores the point that the neo-Confederate movement is in fact an ongoing effort to control the content of southern textbooks and what is taught in southern classrooms dating back to Reconstruction.

In The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader, historian James Loewen recalls a public lecture at the Greensboro Historical Museum in North Carolina in 2007. During his talk, Loewen asked his audience, “Why did we have a Civil War?” The audience responded with four answers: states’ rights, slavery, tariffs, and the election of Abraham Lincoln. States’

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55 SPCL, League of the South.
56 Potok, “Neo Confederate Growing Political Presence”.
rights received more than half of the votes.\textsuperscript{58}

\textbf{1.4 The suburbanization of neo-Confederate politics}

As established earlier, what all neo-Confederate movements have in common are three elements: first, the depreciating of slavery as the root cause of the Civil War. Secondly, the accentuation of Christian and republican values in education. And finally, the general whitewashing of history. For now, the main focus of the transition from the traditional neo-Confederates to the modern neo-Confederate movement has been these elements. In this paragraph however, the circumstances in which these movements developed in the South will be discussed.

Another similarity between Phyllis Schlafy’s “STOP ERA”-network, the League of the South and other modern neo-Confederate interest groups, is that nearly all of them can be considered grassroots movements. In contrast to traditional efforts of top-down mobilization of the South like the Dixiecrat Party during the late 1940s or the political resistance to desegregation following \textit{Brown v. Board of Education} in 1954, these movements did not found their inception at an heirloom desk in some political party’s headquarters, but rather at the kitchen tables of Southern suburbia.\textsuperscript{59}

During the 1960s, a vibrant political mobilization took place within Southern suburbs. Disillusioned with federal politics, suburban activists began recruiting the like-minded, formed activist-groups and entered school board races. According to historian Lisa McGirr, their main objective was “to turn the tide of liberal dominance” and “to safeguard their particular vision of freedom and the American heritage”.\textsuperscript{60}

Even though these grassroots activists have fundamentally shaped U.S. politics, their efforts have long been overshadowed by the more evocative image of the civil rights movement that emerged roughly during the same time. Martin Luther King marching on Selma is far more imprinted in our shared memory of U.S. politics during the sixties than

\textsuperscript{58} Loewen, James W., and Sebesta, Edward H., eds. \textit{Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader : The Great Truth About the Lost Cause}. (Jackson, MS, USA: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 4.
\textsuperscript{59} Lisa McGirr, \textit{Suburban Warriors}, 3.
\textsuperscript{60} Idem, 4.
suburban conservative activism. These images of the left-wing and liberal movements of the 1960s filled the newspapers and dominated the airwaves. It is perhaps no wonder then, that white-collar families living in predominantly white suburbs located far away from the inner-cities where these protests flared most notably, claimed membership of a “silent majority”.61

These kitchen table-politicians more often than not, when asked about their political affiliation, expressed that they represented the “Christian Right”. Grassroots men and women formed an evangelical right-wing subculture that thrived in the South. Lisa McGirr identifies two distinct tendencies of what she calls “suburban warriors”: the recruitment of like-minded suburbanites in activist groups and the movement into more institutional channels by actively backing candidates for local or state political office or becoming candidates themselves.62 While some suburban warriors could be labeled as neo-Confederate, the warriors McGirr describes encompass a much broader phenomenon at the time, including the Christian Anti-communist Crusade.

In *White Flight*, Professor of History Kevin Kruse describes this same broad phenomenon within southern suburbia during the 1960s as “the struggle to defend the ‘southern way of life’”.63 For Kruse, the suburbs represented de facto segregation stemming from class stratification and post-war sprawl. It was in the white communities of southern suburbia that ideologies that stressed individual rights over communal responsibilities, privatization over public welfare and “free enterprise” above everything else. These white suburbanites did not think of themselves in terms of what they fought against but rather in terms of what they fought for. They claimed the right to remain free from what they saw as dangerous encroachments by liberalism and multiculturalism on the southern way of life. This southern way of life included the right to choose their neighbors, their children’s classmates and what was being taught in their children’s classrooms.64

The leaders of these grassroots organizations included lawyers, physicians, teachers, and other upper-middle-class professionals. The suburbanization of Southern politics was fueled by local issues that shifted from desegregation of schools to planned parenthood and civil rights in general but in almost every case included the issue of education. The things

64 Idem, 8-9.
that were taught in the classrooms including the textbooks that were used and the values which were being passed on to the next generation have always been relevant to the people in the suburbs. The predominantly white inhabitants of these areas had for long enjoyed prosperity and tranquility but with the end of segregation, saw a dangerous threat to their long-enjoyed southern way of life. Common enemies were found in big-government liberals, feminists, and gay rights advocates. All were targeted as obstacles to making the United States a more God-centered nation and as a threat to the Southern educational system. The silent majority that had long enjoyed relative peace and quiet now saw their way of life threatened. Metropolitan problems had left them more or less unscathed and multiculturalism had not yet reached white suburbia. But, as textbooks became increasingly standardized, multiculturalism and liberalism had reached their children in the classrooms.

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“The battle over the education of our children is one that we cannot afford to lose. We cannot simply retreat into our churches and hope that things will get better.”

- Don McLeroy

2.1 Education and religious background

The man at the center of all controversy surrounding the 2010 social studies TEKS revision is Don McLeroy. As a dentist living and practicing in the suburbs of Bryan, Texas, Don McLeroy serves as exemplary of a white-collar Texan and, as a brief overview of his life before and during his seat on the Texas School Board of Education will show, representative of a broader development in post-Jim Crow Southern suburban society discussed before.

Don McLeroy grew up in Dallas where he and his family belonged to a mainline Methodist church. They went to church, but not regularly. “If I believed in anything,” McLeroy said to the Observer in 2009, “I believed in science.”

At Texas A&M University, McLeroy studied electrical engineering and went on to join the U.S. Army as a first lieutenant. He served two years and spent four months in Europe “bumming around”. In 1971, he returned to the United States and moved to Washington, D.C. to try to work for the presidential campaign of Democratic presidential candidate George McGovern, but they were not taking any more volunteers by the time he arrived. During his time in Washington D.C, he stayed at his aunt’s house just outside the city.

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69 Ibidem.
According to McLeroy, it was his aunt that first inspired him to the “true” faith. Here also, his life mirrors a broader development in the South, this time that of suburban politics in the region disillusioned with federal politics and a general “turn-to-the-right”, a period when many white Southern voters shifted their allegiance from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party.

Pondering his newfound interest in Christianity, he moved back to Texas where he enrolled in a summer teaching course at The University of Texas (UT), Austin. Here, he wanted to get his certification in order to become a high school teacher. During the class, he was appalled by the strict attention to details and the boring way teaching was being instructed. In the Texas Observer, he recounts his experiences as “horrible” and lamented: “Lord, if this is what teachers are learning, what’s going to happen to our children?”

Don McLeroy swiftly scrapped his plans to become a high school teacher and applied to dental school at UT’s medical branch in Houston. According to the Texas Observer interview, he met a Christian girl there named Nan Flaming, a medical illustrator. Supposedly, he asked her out but she turned him down because he was not a Christian. To woo her, he accepted the offer of joining her to her Church and Bible studies.

Remarkably, McLeroy was not so candid about meeting this girl on his own website. When explaining why he became a Christian he moves straight to the following passage:

“I attended Bible studies; I attended church; I read and reread Paul’s arguments, especially in the book of Romans. I could explain why Christians sing "Washed in the blood of the Lamb"; I could explain the gospel; I could give you the rationale for God becoming a man, for dying on the cross for my sin and why I must trust in Jesus’ death to pay the penalty for my sin. I understood it all. My only problem was I didn’t believe it.”

McLeroy started studying with Flemings’ Bible group. He was skeptical at first. He supposedly kept a notebook of 40-50 reasons for not “accepting Christ”, spanning fifteen to

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72 Saul Elbein, “The Curious Faith of Don McLeroy”.
73 Ibidem.
twenty pages in the book. He told himself that when he had resolved them all, he would convert. While visiting some friends in Austin, he asked them if they believed in a supernatural being. To his surprise, most of them did admit believing in at least some things that McLeroy believed to be supernatural. Back in Houston, he took his notebook and crossed out any objection that was invalidated by the existence of a divine being until there were none left. For him a promise was a promise, “especially one made to God” so he took his leap of faith and from then on, considered himself a devout Christian.74 At first, Nan Fleming did not trust his intentions. She thought he was doing it for her and that he was not really sincere. Gradually though, he won her over. In 1976, they were engaged.75 Here, the life of Don McLeroy mirrors the development of the neo-Confederate movement in the South, both embracing Christianity in the 1970s.

Soon after their engagement, McLeroy’s fiancée handed him literature explaining geological phenomena from a creationist viewpoint. McLeroy was initially skeptical but read them anyway. He started to join her to courses on creationist theories which presented to him a world far different from any he had previously had though possible. One that to him “felt right.”76 McLeroy and Flemming married in 1976 and moved to Bryan where McLeroy started his dental practice. As he started up his practice, he continued his study on creationism. As he learned about creationism he never forgot his desire for a better educational system.77

“Since that day, I have done a lot more reading and studying and thinking about what is the truth. I am now totally convinced that the Bible and Christianity are true. Are there intellectual and rational difficulties to my faith? Yes. But, I have come to see that all people have rational problems with what they believe. Even the most dogged atheist is left with "something from nothing." That certainly is not rational. For me, Christianity brings everything together, in thought, in science, in history, and in life.”78

74 Don McLeroy, “My Testimony”.
75 Saul Elbein, “The Curious Faith of Don McLeroy”.
76 Ibidem.
77 Ibidem.
78 Don McLeroy, “My Testimony”.

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This short biography tells the origin-story about how Don McLeroy eventually became the self-proclaimed young earth creationist who beliefs both the Old and the New Testament to be factual, the earth to be 6,000 years old, that humans walked with dinosaurs and felt the calling to run for a seat on the state board of education.  

2.2 Politics

When Don McLeroy ran for a seat on the Texas SBOE, he represented District 9 in East Texas, a region that prides itself on being the buckle of the Bible Belt. On his personal website and in the numerous interviews he has given, Don McLeroy is very open about his religious views. Although it should be clear that his political views were somewhere on the conservative side of the political spectrum, McLeroy’s exact political affiliation is much less clear. Even though he represented the Republican Party, McLeroy’s true political allegiance has been with the Tea Party. During his political career, Don McLeroy was a popular public speaker at the Tea Party and gave numerous speeches at various political gatherings.

At a Bastrop County Tea Party event in 2010, McLeroy held a speech attacking “the Left”. In this speech, he blamed the Left for twisting the clear meaning of the First Amendment’s protection of religious liberty in order to remove God and religion from society and argued that Leftist thinking and reasoning called for a “radical transformation” of the United States. He argued:

“What we have in America, in the Constitution, is not the "separation of church and state”; what we have is the disestablishment of religion.”

McLeroy continued to call universities “left-wing secular seminaries” and equated California’s overturning of the ban of same-sex marriage “a clear example of the way the left uses science to undermine and do away with biblical authority and wisdom and the ability to

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80 M. Blake, “Revisionaries”.
think.”

During another speech at a meeting of the American Tea Party Constitutional Coalition (ATPCC) in 2011, after the social studies TEKS revision, McLeroy blames evolutionists for causing the controversy by the attempted “hijacking” of the science curriculum. The ATPCC is a national coalition of Tea Parties that are protesting high taxes and what they consider government infractions against the freedom and liberty of the Constitution. According to McLeroy, science had become “the left’s big hammer” for getting their way. “What kind of mind marginalizes, trivializes and ignores these great ideas (of free enterprise and limited government, red.) that have made America exceptional? It’s the leftist mind”, McLeroy reasoned. The curriculum, McLeroy said, should clearly present Christianity as an overall force for good and a key reason for American exceptionalism. He continued:

“The changes attracted national attention because they challenged the powerful ideology of the left and highlighted the great political divide of our country. The left’s principles are diametrically opposed to our founding principles. The left believes in big, not limited, government; they empower the state, not the individual; they focus on differences, not unity.”

In most of McLeroy’s speeches, there are numerous mentions of “states’ rights”, “free-enterprise”, “negative history”, “American exceptionalism” and “the left”. With his emphasis on Christian principles, free enterprise, limited government, American exceptionalism and the separation of church and state as a founding principle of the United States, Don McLeroy was clearly advocating neo-Confederate ideology. Also, just as examples of traditional and modern neo-Confederate movements mentioned in earlier chapters, Don McLeroy labeled any opposition as “leftists”, “revisionists” or a writer of “negative history”.

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82 Quinn, “Don McLeroy’s Swan Song”.
85 McLeroy, “Teaching our Children What it Means to be an American in 2011”.
2.3 Don McLeroy and the Texas State Board of Education

In 2010, the SBOA was comprised out of a diverse group of occupations. Members included a community activist, four teachers, three attorneys, three business owners, a project manager, a publicist, a reading specialist and a dentist. Out of the fifteen members of the SBOE, ten members were affiliated with the Republican Party.

Out of the conservative bloc of the SBOE, many considered Don McLeroy to be the most prominent and the de facto leader. Don McLeroy, a dentist by profession, was first elected to the SBOE in 1998 as a representative of District 9. In 2007 he was elected as chair of the SBOE by then Texas Governor Rick Perry. Before the 2010 TEKS revision, McLeroy had already earned a reputation for supporting controversial beliefs. On his personal website, he had written numerous articles attacking the teaching of evolution in schools, the “Leftist Culture War” and the SBOE TEKS revisions. In an editorial to the Austin American Statesman in 2009, McLeroy wrote:

“*The controversy exists because evolutionists, led by academia’s far-left, along with the secular elite opinion-makers, have decreed that questioning of evolution is not allowed, that it is only an attempt to inject religion or creationism into the classroom. [...] Words that were uncontroversial and perfectly acceptable for nearly two decades are now considered "code words" for intelligent design and are deemed unscientific. The elite fear that "unscientific" weaknesses of evolution will be inserted into the textbooks, leaving students without a good science education and unprepared for the future, compelling businesses to shun "illiterate" Texas."*

In 2009, controversy surrounding McLeroy’s staunch support of the proposed changes to the science curriculum led the Texas Senate to block McLeroy from reelection as chair of the SBOE. During the final phase of his reelection, other Republicans dropped their support for McLeroy. Republican state senator Mike Jackson stated that “there were too

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many other important issues to take up on the floor to waste time on a doomed confirmation.” 

McLeroy ultimately failed to get creationism in the mandated curriculum but succeeded in including the weaknesses of fossil records as evolutionary proof.

During the preamble of the 2010 social studies TEKS revision, McLeroy agreed to an interview with Mariah Blake of Washington Monthly. In this interview, McLeroy describes how he examines a given textbook on United States history:

“The secular humanists may argue that we are a secular nation, but we are a Christian nation founded on Christian principles. The way I evaluate history textbooks is first I see how they cover Christianity and Israel. Then I see how they treat Ronald Reagan—he needs to get credit for saving the world from communism and for the good economy over the last twenty years because he lowered taxes.”

Don McLeroy did not hide his religious or political views here and did not seem to try to cover his convictions during his public activities as member of the Texas SBOE. During a public meeting of the Texas SBOE on September 17, 2009, he made a curious remark concerning civil rights. During the discussion, McLeroy remarked that: “women and ethnic minorities should be thankful to ‘the majority’ — white men — for voting, civil and equal rights.”

When McLeroy lost his bid for re-election in March 2010, it did not stem his influence on the SBOE. Newly elected members of the SBOE would not be officially sworn in until January 2011 and until then, McLeroy promised even more amendments. On April 11, 2010, McLeroy writes:

“The Texas school board is currently adopting changes to the curriculum standards to ensure these principles are taught. For example, we rejected changes that referred to America as imperialistic, that deleted the role religion played in the foundations of representative government, and that downplayed the First Amendment’s protection of the “free exercise” of religion. Also, the board has added requirements to study

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90 M. Blake, “Revisionaries”.
American exceptionalism and our national mottos of “in God we trust” and “e pluribus unum”. The proposed changes have attracted national attention because they challenge the powerful ideology of the left and highlight the great political divide of our country. The left’s principles are diametrically opposed to our founding principles.”

In December, 2010, McLeroy wrote an opinion piece for The Austin American Statesman in which he looks back on his accomplishments while on the SBOE. On the 2010 social studies TEKS revision he commends himself that he has “restored the teaching of the role of religion in the foundation of our representative government, and highlighted the role of the free enterprise system in America’s economic success”.

In 2012, Scott Thurman wrote and directed a documentary following Don McLeroy and his conservative bloc’s campaign during both the science and the social studies TEKS revisions. During the interviews conducted by Thurman, McLeroy is very frank about his motifs and intentions on the SBOE. He is followed during his work on the SBOE, political meetings rallies and personal life. During the interviews, it is rather obvious that McLeroy and his fellow conservative bloc members are motivated by a religious and political agenda. At numerous times, McLeroy explains his young earth creationist vision of history and how “leftist” bias must be removed from the schoolbooks. During the last act of Thurman’s documentary, McLeroy laments on his time in the SBOE:

“[…] education, which is inherently religious, is something that has to be a primary secular purpose when that goes against the religious ideology of the majority of Americans? Their godless left-wing culture has taken over the mainstream media. They have taken over our universities. Thousands of professors have converted our universities into left-wing seminaries. And for the last two years, with the help of their young converts, these so-called experts have taken over our national government. Well, I disagree with those experts. Somebody’s got to stand up to experts.”

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From a secular, Dutch point of view, it is difficult to imagine remarks such as listed above being made in a public setting, let alone a political one. However, in Texas, the turnout rates during the General Elections when the SBOE is elected are so low, that winning a seat on the board is alarmingly easy for candidates with the right financial and electoral support. In 2006, the turnout rates of the General Elections in Texas were just 30.9%. During the last General Elections in 2014, turnout rates in Texas reached just 28.3%, the lowest in the entire United States.\(^95\) When considering that, according to Mariah Blake, during the General Elections of 2006 Don McLeroy and his conservative bloc received support from conservative groups like the Christian Coalition and the Eagle Forum it is no surprise that an ultra-religious dentist from the suburbs of Bryan could hold a seat on the Texas SBOE for more than ten years.\(^96\)

2.4 The Texas textbook tradition

Don McLeroy’s campaign to preserve southern values in Texas’ textbooks was not something Texas had never experienced before. Journalists were quick to link McLeroy’s efforts to earlier endeavors. Cultural historian Lawrence R. Samuel called McLeroy a continuation of “the crusade to infuse ultraconservative values into the textbook selection process”. For Samuel, the most prominent of Texas’ knights crusader were Norma and Mel Gabler.\(^97\)

“If you want a model for what ‘the little guy can do’, begin with the Gablers” wrote columnist Gary North after Mel Gabler’s death in 2004.\(^98\) Mel and Norma Gabler can be considered the first champions of a kitchen-table campaign against “liberal” textbooks and the prototypes of suburban grassroots activism. The Gablers fought against any educational textbook that did not represent their Christian and conservative values and principles and


\(^96\) Blake, “Revisionaries”.


were the first campaigners against public school textbooks in Texas that garnered national attention.

It all started in 1961, at a small kitchen table in Hawkins, Texas. Their son Jim had come home from school that day disturbed about discrepancies between the stories in the U.S. history textbook his school taught from and what his parents had told him. Mel and Norma examined their son’s textbook with history textbooks from 1885 and 1921 and indeed found many differences.99

The Gablers joined the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) of Jim’s school and unlike most PTA members, began to diligently read and criticize all their son’s textbooks on history and social science. The more they read, the angrier they became.100 Furiously, the Gablers went to the superintendent of their son’s school to complain. He explained to them that the school was permitted to purchase only those textbooks that had been screened and approved by the State Board of Education. The superintendent further suggested that if they had any further qualms, they should go and take their complaints to the SBOE in Austin. “That’s where you can have some impact.”101 And so they did.

In 1962, Norma Gabler traveled to Austin to attend the hearing of the textbook committee. It was the first of many trips she would make. In an interview for Texas Monthly in 1982, she recalled being treated badly by committee members and publishers the first few years. During the hearings of the textbook committee, comments or disapproval from the public were neither sought nor accepted. They would soon find out that Norma’s objections to the textbooks would not be rejected so easily.102

By the end of the 1960s, the Gablers had developed a small industry criticizing American and other textbooks. In their view, the textbooks adopted by the Texas SBOE were tainted with Marxism, evolutionism, secular humanism, and leftist propaganda.103

In 1970, the Gablers won their first big victory. Early that year, Norma had pushed for publishers of science textbooks containing material on evolution to require an explicit statement saying that evolution is just a theory, not a fact. Later that year, publishers of

100 North, “Mel Gabler RIP”.
101 Martin, “The Guardians Who Slumbered Not”.
102 Ibidem.
biology textbooks were warned that no book could be adopted by the committee if it contained offensive language.104

The following decade, the Gablers’ protests were gathering steam. The Gablers’ efforts got national attention. Norma, who had a talent for grabbing the media’s attention with provoking sound bites, became a celebrity. In 1973, she famously criticized a fifth grade U.S. history textbook that devoted almost seven pages to Marilyn Monroe and a few sentences to George Washington. Norma gained national headlines by commenting: "We’re not quite ready for Marilyn Monroe as the mother of our country."105 In 1973 the Gablers established the Educational Research Analysts, a nonprofit organization with the aim of systematically evaluating Texan textbooks from a right-wing point of view. They hired assistants and volunteers to help review the textbooks that were going up for adoption by the Texas textbook review committee. Mel took early retirement from his job at Exxon Pipeline and alongside Norma gave fulltime to their mission.106

The Gablers believed that there were violations in most textbooks of traditional family beliefs, attacks against Christian religion, and an undermining of American patriotic heritage, and the political and economic structure of the United States. Their campaign against what they considered "questionable content" was intended to expose the dangers of education. According to writer Randy Moore the Gablers objected to "statements about religions other than Christianity, statements emphasizing contributions by minorities, and statements critical of slavery.107 In this sense, the Gablers adhere to the three elements of neo-Confederate ideology: the depreciating of slavery as the root cause of the Civil War, the accentuation of Christian and republican values in education, and the general whitewashing of history. The Gablers felt as if they had a moral obligation to the children, parents, and citizens of the United States to speak out against educational materials which they found offensive.108

104 Martin, “The Guardians Who Slumbered Not”.
105 North, “Mel Gabler RIP”.
106 Martin, “The Guardians Who Slumbered Not”.
Their celebrity grew as they published more and more reviews. The kept coming back to the textbook review committee year after year, kept mailing politicians for support, kept calling local radio stations, and kept appearing on national television. Decade by decade, their audience grew. They appeared on Nightline, Good Morning America, 60 Minutes and ABC World News Tonight. Their articles were published by Time, Newsweek, People Magazine and Reader’s Digest. In 1985, they even published a textbook of their own: What Are They Teaching Our Children?  

But perhaps more importantly, they had become an integral component of right-wing Texas. Their work is commended by Phyllis Schlafly, founder of the Eagle Forum discussed in the first chapter. On an Eagle Forum’s live podcast, Schlafly called on parents to follow the example of Mel and Norma Gabler to pressure schools into rejecting textbooks the group claims have a “pro-Islam” bias. “We need another Norma Gabler,” Schlafly said.

“Time and time again, the Gablers inflicted enormous financial losses on textbook firms until the publishers learned to clear their textbooks in advance with the Gablers. I can think of no couple that inflicted as much pain on the liberal humanist educational establishment.”

Once outside groups, such as the Gablers, became interested in influencing the content of Texas public school textbooks, the SBOE’s revision process for learning standards in Texas curriculum became more politicized. Back in the early 1970s, at the highpoint of the Gablers’s campaign, only five textbooks per subject got onto the review committee’s list. As the waiting period for the next batch of textbooks could take up to six years, the costs for the publishing companies ran into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. The economic pain of a rejection by the review committee was harsh. It still is.

The similarity between the Gablers and Don McLeroy suggested by Lawrence R.

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112 North, “Mel Gabler RIP”.
114 North, “Mel Gabler RIP”.

40
Samuel seem to hold plenty of water. Both sought to protect southern textbooks from outside attacks on traditional family Christian values and southern heritage and both did little to hide their religious and political agendas. Both the Gablers and McLeRoy lived and operated in southern, white suburbia. Like Lisa McGirr’s “Suburban Warriors” and Matthew D. Lassiter’s “Silent Majority” discussed in the first chapter, the Gablers and McLeRoy had long enjoyed the prosperity and tranquility of southern suburbia. With the end of segregation, they saw in the strengthened ideas of liberalism and multiculturalism a dangerous threat southern society. Evidently, both the Gablers and Don McLeRoy are representative of the broader development of suburban politics in the South.
CHAPTER 3

The 2010 TEKS Revisions

“The people who vote in primaries are the conspiracy theorists. Not all of them, but a good number of them.”

Dan Quinn, communications director for the Texas Freedom Network

3.1 The matter of TEKS revisions

Though all historians have held a high school history textbook during some point during their lives, the process of how the contents of those textbooks came to be may very well be a mystery. In the United States, the driving force behind the creation of the history curriculum varies wildly from state to state, but in all cases, groups of individuals decide what pieces of information the students ought to know and what pieces should be left out of the textbooks.

In the state of Texas, public education is administered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The TEA aims to "provide leadership, guidance, and resources to help schools meet the educational needs of all students and prepare them for success in the global economy”. The authority of the TEA is shared by the State Commissioner of Education and the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE). According to the Texas Education Agency, the SBOE is comprised out of fifteen members. Each member is elected and represents his or her district. From the elected members, the governor of Texas appoints one chair. The terms of

the board members are four years long and are arranged so that no seat is up for re-election at the same time.¹¹⁸

The state standards for what students should know and be able to do are called the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The SBOE has legislative authority to revise and adopt the TEKS. Every ten years the SBOE reconsiders and revises the TEKS of all subjects offered in public schools. According to the Texas Education Code, “The Texas state Board of Education, with the direct participation of educators, parents, business and industry representatives, and employers shall by rule identify the essential knowledge and skills of each subject of the required curriculum that all student should be able to demonstrate”.¹¹⁹

By selecting and approving the appropriate curriculum for public schools in Texas, the board holds a great amount of power regarding the education of schoolchildren in Texas.¹²⁰

The process created by the Texas State Board of Education did not appear to be at first glance particularly controversial or uniquely different from the process other states use to create standards and curriculum. However, the Texas State Board of Education ensured that there would be two crucial differences in its process. First, the State Board got to choose the “experts” to review the state standards. Second, the State Board reserved for itself the power to actually change the standards, rather than merely voting to approve or not approve the standards as in other states. In 2010, The Texas State Board made some changes to the way their curriculum standards were adopted. Professor of history Fritz Fischer states in his book The Memory Hole: The U.S. History Curriculum Under Siege, that this was done because:

“It was their stated goal to have complete control over the Texas school curriculum. The members ran for election for the school board for the very purpose of inserting their view of history (and science) into Texas classrooms. They believed that Texas history classrooms were being taken over by the “liberal educational elite,” and they wanted to not only slow this process, but reverse it by bringing twenty-first century

conservatism into the history classroom.”

The process of revising the TEKS is initiated by the SBOE. Each member of the SBOE is allowed to select an individual to participate on a review committee to write the initial draft of the TEKS. The review committee in 2010 was comprised out of schoolteachers, district administrators and college professors who applied for selection. The candidates are then split up into smaller committees according to their preferred courses. In 2009, courses were divided up into the following committees: Economics, Psychology, Social Studies Research Methods, Sociology, Special Topics in Social Studies, United States Government, United States History Since Reconstruction, World Geography Studies, and World History Studies.

Once the committees are established, the TEA, directed by the SBOE, gives the committee the process in which they must review the existing TEKS and submit recommendations for the new TEKS.

3.2 The review committee

One member of the social studies review committee was Bill Ames, a conservative Minuteman and a volunteer for the Texas Eagle Forum. He had no experience in the field of history or education; a fact he did not shy away from but was even proud of. In 2002, Ames first took seat on the Texas textbook review committee where he suggested more than two hundred changes for one textbook. In 2009 Don McLeroy, then chair of the SBOE, appointed Ames to the social studies review committee. Ames saw himself as a conservative education reformer, the only non-educator and only member of the review committee who “consistently supported conservative principles against a leftist majority. In the same article, Ames wrote he felt “outvoted 8 to 1”, something that cannot be true
due to the TEA requirement of consensus.\textsuperscript{126} Laura Muñoz and Julio Noboa, two other members of the Texas textbook review committee in 2009, paint a different picture. Laura Muñoz is an assistant professor of history at Texas A&M University and a 2011 National Academy of Education/Spencer Postdoctoral Fellow. Julio Noboa is an assistant professor of social studies at the University of Texas.\textsuperscript{127}

According to their rapport, Ames caused difficulties from the start. On the first morning of the February 2009 meeting, Ames challenged the instructions in the general session. One review committee member, an economics professor, made a point about the need for the consistent use of correct terminology and alignment across the curriculum. He wanted to make sure the recommendations made by the review committees would include the terms \textit{capitalism} and \textit{socialism} when appropriate instead of the terms \textit{free enterprise} and \textit{communism}. The term \textit{free enterprise} emerged as a critique of Roosevelt’s New Deal and the government’s actions after the stock market crash of 1929.\textsuperscript{128} Ames reacted to these points by challenging the professor in a public outburst.\textsuperscript{129}

According to Muñoz and Noboa, once the textbook review committee assembled, Ames promoted jingoism and held all editorial changes to the standards against his view of American exceptionalism.\textsuperscript{130} As the TEA required the textbook review committees to reach an unanimous agreement on each and every standard, Muñoz, Noboa and other committee members had to concede to some objections from Ames in order to achieve balance somewhere else in the standards.\textsuperscript{131} Muñoz and Noboa report the review committee as having to spend the bulk of its time negotiating with Ames to reject his injection of his staunch patriotism in every standard. According to Ames, he strived to oppose the promotion of politically biased, negative view of American history.\textsuperscript{132}

Muñoz and Noboa’s description of events show Ames as utilizing every opportunity he could to whitewash the history curriculum and inject it with American exceptionalism. Ames opposed any reference to the second wave of the women’s movement and was visibly

\textsuperscript{126} Ames, “Have Liberal Activists Hijacked Texas’ Social Studies Curriculum Process?”.
\textsuperscript{130} Muñoz and Noboa, “Hijacks and Hijinks”, 48.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{132} Ames, “Have Liberal Activists Hijacked Texas’ Social Studies Curriculum Process?”.
appalled when the committee argued whether to add “women’s liberation” or any mention of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, and queer (LGBTQ) movements of the late twentieth century. To reach a consensus, Muñoz suggested that the committee add Eagle Forum founder Phyllis Schlafly’s anti-feminist campaign. This strategy irked several committee members but created space for a more varied portrayal of women’s experience in the curriculum. 133 Ames took public credit for arguing for Schlafly’s inclusion in the Texas history curriculum. Even Don McLeroy shared in Ames’s glory for appointing him as an expert reviewer. In 2010, the Texas branch of Schlafly’s Eagle Forum awarded Don McLeroy the Patriot Award for his “outstanding courageous and Christian leadership on the Texas State Board of Education.”, its highest commendation for conservative activism.134

At times, Ames’s radical ideology even led to racial tension within the committee. At the first meeting of the committee, Ames complained to Muñoz that “all the white men were disappearing from the history textbooks”. He reportedly seldom spoke to Britine Burton, the only African American on the review committee. According to Muñoz’s testimony of the meetings, one of Ames’s few personal words to Burton was that all the problems the review committee had encountered only occurred once the TEA appointed “people like you”.135

Muñoz and Noboa conclude that in the end, the textbook review committee failed to focus on the broad goals of social studies but instead disintegrated into a battle over promoting one specific kind of history over another.136 To Muñoz and Noboa, Ames’s entrenched resistance and overall behavior on the textbook review committee was clear evidence that Bill Ames was Don McLeroy’s “deliberately appointed representative, informant, and perhaps even saboteur”.137

135 Laura K. Muñoz, Personal anecdote of the October 2009 meeting of the textbook review committee in Austin Texas in: Erekson, Politics and the History Curriculum.
136 Muñoz and Noboa, “Hijacks and Hijinks”, 54.
137 Idem, 48.
3.3 The Expert Reviewer

The textbook review committee was later joined by a number expert reviewers. The experts are appointed by the SBOE but require nomination by only two members. In 2009, six such expert reviewers were appointed, including a legal scholar, a geography educator, two ministers and two historians.\textsuperscript{138}

In 2009, one of the expert reviewers was Jesús F. de la Teja. De la Teja is University Distinguished Professor at Texas State University and former president of the Texas State Historical Association (TSHA).\textsuperscript{139} In April 2009, SBOE member Pat Hardy contacted De la Teja to enquire if he would be interested in serving as an expert reviewer on behalf of Rene Nuñez of district 1 and Mary Helen Berlanga of district 2, both Democratic SBOE members.\textsuperscript{140} One would think that the expert reviewers worked together as a team, but according to De La Teja, did was not the case. De La Teja performed his duties independently and had minimal contact with the SBOE. He never met any of his fellow expert reviewers before the public hearings of the SBOE in September 2009.\textsuperscript{141}

De la Teja was one of the last expert reviewers to be appointed by the SBOE. By the time De la Teja received the instructions and his copy of the social studies TEKS, the “craziness” was already well under way. First, the SBOE had then already gone through the culture wars surrounding the language, arts and science TEKS. Members of the SBOE on both sides of the political spectrum seemed primed for a new fight and actually seemed to relish in the prospect of a new round of political battle. Secondly, after the previous TEKS revision had garnered such public attention, the media this time was ready to get full coverage of the political mayhem. Third, in De la Teja’s understanding, the review committee already met before he was appointed and board members were already discussing the preliminary proposals. Lastly, De la Teja remarks that there was a profound mistrust of traditional experts, teachers and higher education faculty. To De la Teja, this mistrust was exemplary of a general anti-intellectual attitude towards the TEKS revision, one where faith-based reasoning was equated to scientific explanations and cultural change was put on the same

\textsuperscript{139} Idem, 232.
Fig. 1: Guidelines for Expert Feedback on the Social Studies TEKS

Please review the current social studies TEKS for Grades K-12 and respond to the following question. In your feedback please indicate the specific grade level/course and student expectation number you are referring to, as appropriate.

1. Do the TEKS ensure that social studies concepts are presented in an accurate and factual manner?
   Do the standards promote ideological neutrality by balancing people/events from various sides of the political spectrum?
2. Is a complete and logical development of social studies concepts followed for each grade level or course?
3. Are historically significant events and people included at the appropriate grade level or subject, or are there significant omissions of important historical happenings and people?
4. Have the correct vocabulary and terminology been used?
5. Are there specific areas that need to be updated?
6. Are the social studies concept/content statements grade-level appropriate?
7. Are the Student Expectations (SEs) clear and specific? Do they focus on academic content?
8. Are the “social studies skills” statements at the end of each grade level/subject handled properly, or is there a better means to address these skills within the standards?
9. Do the standards promote an appreciation for the basic values of our state and national heritage?
   Are the significant aspects of our state and national heritage included at the appropriate grade levels?
10. Do the standards promote citizenship, patriotism and an understanding of the benefits of the free enterprise system?
11. Do you have any other suggestions for ways in which the social studies TEKS can be improved?
12. Is the subject area aligned horizontally and vertically?

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142 De la Teja,”A Voice Crying in the Wilderness?”, 60.
plane as societal breakdown.\textsuperscript{143}

De la Teja received instructions from the SBOE consisting of twelve points. Two of those, De la Teja found contradicting. The first guideline asked: “Do the standards promote ideological neutrality by balancing people/events from various sides of the political spectrum?” whereas the tenth guideline asked: “Do the standards promote citizenship, patriotism and an understanding of the benefits of the free enterprise system?”.\textsuperscript{144} De la Teja had concerns that the promotion of an understanding of “the benefits of the free enterprise system” was not ideologically neutral.\textsuperscript{145}

The result of De la Teja’s review was a 21-page report covering only historical aspects of the social studies TEKS. De la Teja’s recommended changes to the social studies TEKS include adding to the history of the civil rights movement other minority rights movements than the language in the then current standard accounted for, a more precise use of the term colonization, and more emphasis on multiculturalism and the influence of both the Indian Movement and the Chicano Movement on U.S. history.\textsuperscript{146} "We have tended to exclude or marginalize the role of Hispanic and Native American participants in the state’s history," said De la Teja in an interview with the Wall Street Journal in the summer of 2009.\textsuperscript{147} None of these recommendations were accepted by the SBOE.

Later that year, De la Teja received the revisions done by the review committee. The documents containing the revisions were accompanied by a copy of the “SBOE Broad Strokes Guidance for the Social Studies TEKS Writing Teams”, a one-page set of bullet points that sadly was not conserved online for historical review in this thesis. According to De la Teja, this document reflected the various ideological concerns and immediate agendas of the SBOE board members. Some board members had concerns that U.S. history tended to be presented “negatively” by “revisionist” historians.\textsuperscript{148}

In August 2009, De la Teja submitted his review and was invited to speak at the next meeting of the SBOE in September that year. During his ten minute-testimony, De la Teja

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{143} De la Teja，“A Voice Crying in the Wilderness?”, 62.
\textsuperscript{144} Idem, 61.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{148} De la Teja,“A Voice Crying in the Wilderness?”, 67.
\end{flushright}
argued for a curriculum that taught a history that promoted a broad sense of citizenship and highlighting historical heroes of varied groups that played a role during the history of the United States.\textsuperscript{149} De la Teja did not feel that the message sunk in with his audience. After the expert reviewer hearings, the SBOE began squabbling about which “heroes” should be included and which should be omitted in the U.S. history curriculum. This continued during the meetings in October. Every proposal was met with great distrust from every side of the political spectrum as if part of “one big conspiracy of the other side to politically influence what should be taught in the classrooms.”\textsuperscript{150} Sadly, De la Teja does not speak to the existence or nonexistence of such a conspiracy and avoids taking sides in his report.

However, at the end of his report, De la Teja does briefly expresses some concern surrounding an experience after the expert reviewer hearings. He recounts spending some time with the textbook review committee. He describes it still being locked in an ideological battle over which historical actors should be included as “examples” and which should be omitted. The whole committee seemed to be in agreement, except for one member, Bill Ames. For De la Teja, this lockdown represented one of his biggest problems with the entire process because it detracted from developing clear-cut curriculum standards.\textsuperscript{151}

After the committee has agreed on the content, the proposed TEKS is submitted to the SBOE. The SBOE must hold meetings in order to hear public testimony regarding the proposed changes and to decide on amendments proposed by its members. After all groups and individuals are heard and all amendments are either rejected or approved, the SBOE moves to adopt the revised TEKS.\textsuperscript{152} The proceedings of these hearings are discussed next.

\textit{3.4 The Texas State Board of Education}

The Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) is the governing body that essentially determines the history curriculum. According to the TEA statute and Texas state Constitution, the policy authority of the Texas SBOE includes the following:

\textsuperscript{149} De la Teja, “A Voice Crying in the Wilderness?”, 68-69.
\textsuperscript{150} Idem, 69.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{152} Strunc, \textit{Texas Politics in Citizenship Education}, 67.
“• Setting curriculum standards;
• Reviewing and adopting instructional materials;
• Establishing graduation requirements;
• Overseeing the Texas Permanent School Fund;
• Appoint board members to military reservation and special school districts.”\(^{153}\)

The members of the Texas State Board of Education are chosen in so-called partisan elections. A partisan election is an election where candidates are listed on the ballot with indication of their political party. Furthermore, Texas holds partisan primaries in which Republican and Democratic candidates compete to represent their party in the general election.\(^{154}\) In most other states, the members of the state board are appointed by the governor or local officials. Of the fifty states, fifteen have elected boards of education. Of those fifteen, ten states elect their board members through partisan elections.\(^{155}\)

On January 13, 2010 the SBOE held its first full board meeting after the TEKS review committee had submitted their recommendations. During this meeting, a public hearing was held, allowing members of the board to hear public testimonies concerning the proposed changes to the TEKS. The public testimonies were not further discussed by the board. The following day, the first reading of the TEKS was held and proposed changes to the TEKS were heard for the first time. During the remainder of the meeting, one hundred and twelve amendments were proposed.\(^{156}\) On Friday, January 15, additional amendments to the TEKS were made. At the end of the meeting, the SBOE unanimously decided to postpone the first filing of the TEKS until March 2010.\(^{157}\)

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\(^{156}\) Strunc, Texas Politics in Citizenship Education, 183.

Fig. 2: State Board of Education Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Member</th>
<th>City</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Rene Nuñez</td>
<td>El Paso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Mary Helen Berlanga</td>
<td>Corpus Christi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Rick Agosto</td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Lawrence Allen</td>
<td>Houston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Ken Mercer</td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Terri Leo</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>David Bradley</td>
<td>Beaumont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Barbara Cargill</td>
<td>The Woodlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Don McLeroy</td>
<td>College Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Cynthia Noland Dunbar</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Patricia Hardy</td>
<td>Fort Worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Geraldine Miller</td>
<td>Dallas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Mavis B. Knight</td>
<td>Dallas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Gail Lowe</td>
<td>Lampass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Bob Craig</td>
<td>Lubbock</td>
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During the first meeting in March, the SBOE again heard public testimony from different groups regarding the TEKS revisions. Again, there is no mention of any discussion regarding the public testimonies brought forward to the board. Three whole days, the SBOE met. During these meetings, amendments to the social studies TEKS were put forward, discussed and voted on. On the last day, the SBOE accepted the first filing and authorization of revisions to the TEKS.\textsuperscript{159}

On May, 2010, the SBOE again heard public testimony for numerous groups and individuals and again, no action or discussion regarding these testimonies seem to be undertaken by the board. The next day, the board approved the second filing and authorization of the TEKS revisions and more amendments were made. At last, on Friday 21 May, 2010, the SBOE adopted the revised social studies curriculum standards.\textsuperscript{160}

Another thing that stands out in the meeting minutes of the SBOE is the large number and the diversity of speakers during the hearing of public testimony. The SBOE invested much time in hearing public testimony but does not seem to take any into account. No testimony is discussed when voting on amendments and the final revised TEKS does not reflect the diversity of speakers that attended the public hearings.

When examining the meeting minutes, one gets the impression that most of the amendments brought forward by the Democratic bloc, only very few survived the vote. Meanwhile, amendments by the conservative bloc are almost always successful or are repeatedly put forward until they do pass the vote. Democratic SBOE board member Mavis Knight argued that the conservative bloc led by McLeroy frequently voted together to block any amendments put forward by the democratic bloc and get their way in revisions to the TEKS that “imposed a conservative ideology”.\textsuperscript{161}

To check the validity of this accusation, the reports of the SBOE meetings concerning the 2010 TEKS revision have been thoroughly analyzed. The table below shows the number of motions moved by either the democrats or the republicans on the board and whether they were carried successfully or failed both in number and percentage. On the far right of

the table, separate statistics for Don McLeroy are included. In these statistics, motions are assigned to either bloc if both the primary mover and the second of the motion represent the same party. The statistics for Don McLeroy include motions moved by as well as seconded by McLeroy.

According to these statistics, motions moved by the Democratic bloc were on average carried only 48% of the time while the Republican bloc enjoyed a 92% average success rate. While certainly not all motions moved by the Democratic bloc were shot down immediately, more than half did not survive the vote. Meanwhile, Don McLeroy’s average success rate was 90%. Considering these numbers, Knight’s accusation seems to hold some water.

Fig. 3: SBOE voting statistics\textsuperscript{162}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>%</td>
<td>Failed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 13, 2010</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 14, 2010</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 15, 2010</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 10, 2010</td>
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<td>20%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 12, 2010</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 20, 2010</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 21, 2010</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A telling example of the tactics used by the conservative bloc led by Don Mcleroy are the motions regarding cultural movements in art, music, and literature in U.S. in the history since 1877 course. The text of the TEKS initially read:

“Describe the impact of significant examples of cultural movements in art, music, and literature, such as Tin Pan Alley, the Harlem Renaissance, rock and roll, the Chicano Mural Movement, and hip hop on American society.”\textsuperscript{163}


In January, Don McLeroy moved to recommend that hip hop should be stricken from the TEKS and country and western should be added. This motion failed. Next, two other republican members moved to recommend that country and western should be added while leaving the mention of hip hop intact. This motion was carried. On March 11 however, Don McLeroy yet again proposed to strike hip hop from the TEKS. This time, his proposition included a mention of the Beat Generation. Democratic board members Rick Agosto and Lawrence Allen had tried the day before to include the Beat Generation in the TEKS. By adding the Beat Generation to his motion, Don McLeroy secured the majority he needed to remove hip hop and add country and western to the TEKS.164 Ultimately the TEKS read:

“Describe both the positive and negative impacts the impact of significant examples of cultural movements in art, music, and literature such as Tin Pan Alley, the Harlem Renaissance, the Beat Generation, rock and roll, the Chicano Mural Movement, and country and western music on American society.”165

While it would be too elaborate to dissect every TEKS that was put to a vote during the meetings of the SBOE in 2010, examining the minutes as a whole reveals the series of events surrounding the efforts of Don McLeroy to remove hip hop and add country and western as typical of McLeroy’s strategy to inject his religious and political view into the TEKS. This strategy worked on the basis of three possible situations. First, the republicans outnumbered the democrats within the board ten to five. Most of the voting was settled along this basic division. Secondly, when in the first instance a majority along this partisan split could not be achieved, the desired motion would somewhere in the future again be put forward with only minute and trivial changes. In most cases, members of the republican bloc that at first checked a majority would be swayed in this manner. Finally, if all else failed, some of the democrats on the board could be swung by adding something they wished in the proposed TEKS. In the case mentioned above, Don McLeroy added a mention of the Beat Generation in order to secure the removal of hip hop and the inclusion of country and western in the TEKS.

165 TEKS 113.41 (c) 24 B.
CHAPTER 4

Neo-Confederate Ideology in the 2010 TEKS Revision

"The foundational principles of our country are very biblical... That needs to come out in the textbooks."

- Don McLeroy

4.1 Depreciation of slavery as the cause of the Civil War

In the first chapter of this thesis, the origin of neo-Confederate ideology and modern neo-Confederate movements in the United States and Texas in particular were discussed. It was determined that all these movements have in common three distinct elements: first, the depreciating of slavery as the root cause of the Civil War. Secondly, the accentuation of Christian and republican values in education. And finally, the general whitewashing of history.

According to Edward Sebesta, the 2010 social studies TEKS revision attempted to mainstream neo-Confederate ideology. As mentioned before, Sebesta feared that the new standards would instill a neo-Confederate consciousness that supported neo-Confederate ideology. But where exactly did the SBOE during the reign of Don McLeroy cross the line and went from an ordinary administrative body to a branch of the neo-Confederate movement?

The 2010 social studies TEKS revision stood in stark contrast to the previous standards adopted by the SBOE in 1998. For example, “states’ rights” was only mentioned once as a cause of the Civil War in 1998 was now mentioned four times. The 2010 social

\[166\] Stephany Simon, “The Culture Wars’ New Front”.

studies TEKS also required students to compare the inaugural address of Abraham Lincoln and Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Confederate General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson was recommended as a significant figure. Other Confederates were added to the curriculum standards, such as: Confederate Texas Governor Francis Lubbock and Confederate military officers John Reagan, John Hood, Thomas Green, and John Magruder.¹⁶⁸

More dangerous than highlighting Confederate military officers are assertions concerning states’ rights as cause of the Civil War. In the social studies TEKS of 2010, fifth-and eighth-grade students were asked to identify and explain “the causes of the Civil War, including sectionalism, states’ rights, and slavery”. In seventh-grade, students were asked to “explain reasons for the involvement of Texas in the Civil War such as states’ rights, slavery, sectionalism, and tariffs.” Finally, in eight-grade, students would “explain constitutional issues arising over the issue of states’ rights, including the Nullification Crisis and the Civil War.”¹⁶⁹ In the same standards, students were asked to: “explain reasons for the development of the plantation system, the transatlantic slave trade, and the spread of slavery.”¹⁷⁰ According to Julio Noboa, slavery was hereby explained as simply an “economic system” without any moral, social or political considerations.¹⁷¹

Eric Foner expressed his concern about the 2010 TEKS revisions in an editorial in The Nation. Foner argues that, “the changes made by the SBOE seek to reduce or elide discussion of slavery, mentioned mainly for its "impact" on different regions and the cause of the Civil War. A reference to the Atlantic slave trade is dropped in favor of "Triangular trade." Jefferson Davis’s inaugural address as president of the Confederacy will now be studied alongside Abraham Lincoln’s speeches.” Foner feared that students will emerge ill-prepared for life in the twenty-first century.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ TEKS. 8.b.4.7.
4.2 Accentuation of Christian and republican values

The SBOE meeting minutes seem to reveal a strong preference for republican discourse and associated conservative values. Repeatedly, a “good” citizen is classified as someone who supports a limited national government, regards free enterprise as the best economic system and values above all the value of the individual. In January 14, the SBOE approved several amendments emphasizing free enterprise and its benefits.\textsuperscript{173} In the March 12 meeting of the SBOE, McLeroy successfully put forward a motion replacing the term “democratic societies” with “societies with representative governments” wherever it appeared in the TEKS documents.\textsuperscript{174}

McLeroy’s seems to have highlighted his Christian beliefs when successfully proposing an amendment that inserted a presupposed intent of the Founding Fathers to protect religious freedom and embrace Christian principles in government into a section regarding the requirement of students to learn about the separation of church and state.\textsuperscript{175} Seemingly, McLeroy and his conservative bloc, utilized every opportunity to insert Christian principles and Republican values of free enterprise and limited government into the revised curriculum. In the adopted 2010 social studies TEKS, students were asked to “examine the reasons the Founding Fathers protected religious freedom in America...and compare and contrast this to the phrase ‘separation of church and state’”.\textsuperscript{176} The TEKS put strong emphasis on the influence of Christianity in American government. For instance, at one point in the standards, the students are directed to understand how the creation of American government was affected by biblical law. The learning standards goes so far as to specifically mention the impact of Moses and the Ten Commandments.\textsuperscript{177}

In 2011, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute reviewed the quality of state United States history standards. In their review, the Institute found the state history standards of Texas

\textsuperscript{176} TEKS, 113.44.c.7.G.
\textsuperscript{177} Strunc, \textit{Texas Politics in Citizenship Education}, 175.
even worse than in their previous assessment in 2003. In their report, the Fordham Institute writes the following:

“Still, the leading edge of the conservative effort is in Texas, where a highly public and blatantly partisan battle has erupted into the national media. The conservative majority on the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) has openly sought to use the state curriculum to promote its political priorities, molding the telling of the past to justify its current views and aims. Indeed, the SBOE majority displayed overt hostility and contempt for historians and scholars, whom they derided as insidious activists for a liberal academic establishment.”

The Fordham Institute further accuses the TEKS revisions of blatantly celebrating the free enterprise system, downplaying slavery and segregation, disproportionally discussing Native American and African American contributions to American history and dismissing the separation of church and state as a founding principle of the United States. According to the review, members of the SBOE seemed “determined to inject their personal religious beliefs into history education”.

4.3 Whitewashing of history.

In May 2010, the American Historical Association (AHA) in a statement to the board members of the SBOE expressed concern that the proposed curriculum reduces or renders invisible “certain individuals and events”. The AHA accuses the SBOE of almost entirely discounting the importance of human activity in North America before the British colonization of the Atlantic Coast and omitting key elements of Indian, Spanish, African, and Mexican people’s presence and actions. In their statement, the ASA asks the Texas SBOE to extend its period of deliberation and decision making and to take up a further review of

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the proposed history standards.¹⁸⁰

The 2010 social studies TEKS also did not include any real consideration of past discrimination in its standards for citizenship education. Slavery was only alluded to by asking students to “recall conditions that produced the 14th Amendment”.¹⁸¹ The achievements of the civil rights movement is also almost excluded entirely from the standards. A single reference to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is located in a “culture” education standard of the TEKS. Students were asked to “evaluate a U.S. government policy or court decision that has affected a particular racial, ethnic, or religious group, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964”.¹⁸²

At the last adoption meeting, Republican SBOE board member Ken Mercer moved to add to the standards that students “evaluate the impact of the election of Hiram Rhodes Levels.”¹⁸³ Hiram Rhodes Levels was the first African American to be elected as a U.S. senator and a prominent figure during the Reconstruction era. At first glance, the inclusion of a prominent African American figure would seem uncharacteristic choice for a member of the conservative bloc. However, the choice of Revels as representing of African American office holders in Reconstruction by one of McLeroy’s stooges makes more sense if one would consider that at the end of his career, Revels sided with the white supremacists who overturned Reconstruction in Mississippi.¹⁸⁴ In 1876, Revels wrote to President Ulysses S. Grant a long letter justifying the overthrow of Reconstruction in Mississippi. Utilizing the language typical of neo-Confederate movements, Revels portrayed African Americans as “deluded”.¹⁸⁵ By presenting Revels as an archetype of African American politicians during the Reconstruction era, the 2010 social studies TEKS perpetuated a neo-Confederate view of Reconstruction history.

During the public hearings of the 2010 TEKS revision, many criticized the SBOE for neglecting Latino representation in the Texas and U.S. History standards. The Latino population constituted the largest ethnic minority group in the United States. In Texas,
Latino students outnumbered white students ever since the schoolyear of 2008-2009 by over a million. \(^{186}\) Latino influence, in Texas particularly, is difficult to ignore. However, according to Julio Noboa, Latinos were often ignored, marginalized and denigrated in the 2010 TEKS revisions. \(^{187}\)

In Erikson’s *Politics and the History Curriculum*, Noboa analyzes the frequency and context of mentions of individuals, groups, events and concepts concerning ethnic minorities and women in the 2010 social studies TEKS. He found that of the 111 individuals that were named in the proposed U.S. History part of the TEKS, 16 were women, 12 were African American and only 7 were Latino. \(^{188}\) Noboa concludes that, when comparing the 2010 TEKS with the previous TEKS of 1998, despite a notable increase in the absolute number of times ethnic minorities and women are mentioned, their percentage of total individuals mentioned in the standards is relatively still very small. \(^{189}\)

When examining the 2010 social studies TEKS, it is very difficult to miss the distinct patterns of neo-Confederate ideology. In the 2010 TEKS, there was a blatant emphasis on the free enterprise system and a disregard of the immoral institution of slavery as a root cause of the Civil War. The 2010 TEKS disproportionately discussed Latino, Native American and African American contributions to American history and ignored the separation of church and state as a founding principle of the United States.

4.4 The importance of Texas

But why would anyone care about textbooks in Texas? With more than 5 million schoolchildren in 2012, Texas was the largest consumer of textbooks in the United States. \(^{190}\) Therefore, as a market, Texas was so big that many national publishers tended to gear their school textbooks to whatever standards the Texas SBOE had set. As the cost of developing a single textbook was so great, the risk of losing Texas as a consumer market was high. This


\(^{187}\) Noboa, “Names, Numbers, and Narratives”, 105.

\(^{188}\) Idem, 107-108.

\(^{189}\) Idem, 107.

means that publishers that get their book approved by the Texas SBOE could count on millions of dollars in sales. According to political commentator Gail Collins, about half to 80% of all social studies textbooks sold in the United States contain the basic Texas-approved narrative, “publishers will do whatever it takes to get on the Texas list.”  All this sparked a fear of Texas’ curriculum standards that stoked a political backlash. It moved California state senator Leland Lee to draft legislation to ensure none of the Texas SBOE history curriculum seeped into the California textbooks.

But it would be a gross oversimplification to imply that just because Texas is such a large market for textbooks, the Texas standards would impact the United States as a whole. According to Brian Thevenot of the Texas Tribune, the real issue is more complex. Because of their sheer buying power, bigger states with a larger number of schoolchildren did indeed in the past have a strong influence on the content of textbooks. Publishers then would print textbooks almost exclusively for a national market. More recently however, the rise of state curriculum standards and state-based testing forced the publishers to customize their textbooks for different states, even more so for the thirty states that do not have a statewide textbook adoption process. At the same time, technological innovation gave publishers more and cheaper options to customize their textbooks for each state.

The statement that because Texas is such a large market for textbooks its curriculum standards would impact other states is only true in so far as Texas was the largest statewide adopter of textbooks. The real matter of Texan influence was, however, that Texas traditionally adopted books that could be easily modified to accommodate the national market. The adopted books were comprised out of a relatively generic main text accompanied by Texas-specific sidebars. In this manner, other states could use the core text and substitute the information in the sidebars.

This easiness by which the books adopted by the Texas SBOE could by modified for

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194 Erekson, Politics and the History Curriculum, xi.
195 Brian Thevenot, “Texas Textbooks' National Influence Is a Myth”.
196 Erekson, Politics and the History Curriculum, xi.
the national market is the biggest danger of Texas’ influence. Historian Eric Foner dismissed Texas’ influence on the Colbert Report. “No self-respecting historian would change their version of U.S. history just because the Texas school board says so,” he said. Eric Foner’s Give Me Liberty! is one of the most popular U.S. history textbooks in the United States and is even used by my university in the Netherlands. In the United States it is used in most colleges and even most high schools.

But Foner’s book, extensively researched and written by a single scholar, is still the exception; most history textbooks are not written by historians. Most high school textbooks are written by committees, at times comprised of more than a dozen writers that do not own the right to any of their work and cannot object to any changes to their work after they have submitted their drafts.

“High school textbooks are cooked quickly and to order, pressed together from hundreds of standards that reflect, in many ways, the lowest common denominator of thousands of opinions. They are, in short, the chicken nuggets of the literary world.”

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199 Brian Thevenot, “Texas Textbooks’ National Influence Is a Myth”.
200 Ibidem.
Fig. 4: How States Choose Textbooks

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Textbook adoption states
| Including Grades K-8 in California |

No statewide textbook adoption process
| Including Grades 9-12 in California |

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The diagram illustrates the distribution of textbook adoption states across the United States. The map color-codes states based on their textbook adoption processes: those that adopt textbooks with grades K-8 included in California and those without a statewide adoption process. Each state is labeled with its population, and the figures indicate the total public school attendance for the specified years.

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Conclusion

“As Texas goes, so goes the Nation.”

- Gene B. Preuss, associate professor of history at Trinity University.

The social studies TEKS revision of 2010 brought public attention to the Texas SBOE. Millions of Americans followed the events through internet articles, radio-shows and news-reports. All those who tuned in were offered an insight as to the dangerous influence of local politics on what was going to be taught in American classrooms. Even though Texas’ embarrassment caused by the media attention eventually kept Don McLeroy from being reelected as chair and led the SBOE to take some careful steps to reevaluate their curriculum adoption process, not much has changed since the events of 2010. Members of the board are still elected through an election in which just above a quarter of the total electorate shows up to vote and SBOE are still subjected to the lobbying of religious and political interest groups. This process leaves the seats on the SBOE open to other neo-Confederates inspired by Don McLeroy.

By assessing the development of neo-Confederate ideology and the debate on earlier examples of political influence on textbooks and by stacking these historical perspectives against the 2010 TEKS revision and the actions of Don McLeroy as member and chair of the Texas SBOE during these events, this thesis has provided a new perspective on the historical debate concerning political influence on U.S. history textbooks. This thesis has aspired to set a narrow debate of the 2010 TEKS revision in to broader context of developments in Southern suburbs and to add to the historiography of neo-Confederate ideology.

The main question of this thesis was what circumstances made it possible for Don McLeroy to inject neo-Confederate dogma into the U.S. history curriculum in post-Jim Crow Texas. In the first chapter, the development of the neo-Confederate movement was explored and three distinctive elements of neo-Confederate ideology were distinguished:

the depreciating of slavery as the root cause of the Civil War, the accentuation of Christian and republican values in education, and the general whitewashing of history. It is important to maintain “neo-Confederate” as a label for this ideology as it solidifies the movement’s roots within the Lost Cause ideology and underscores the point that the modern neo-Confederate movement is an ongoing effort to control the content of southern textbooks and what is taught in southern classrooms dating back to Reconstruction.

The elements of neo-Confederate ideology were then held against the events of the 2010 social studies TEKS revision, the actions of Don McLeroy as chair of the SBOE and the actual documents of the social studies TEKS that was adopted in 2010.

When assessing the South’s troubling history with neo-Confederate ideology and Don McLeroy’s actions within the Texas SBOE, no other conclusion can be made other than that Don McLeroy’s efforts within the Texas SBOE during the Social Studies TEKS revision of 2010 correspond with neo-Confederate dogma and that Don McLeroy actively injected this dogma into the Social Studies TEKS. Not only did Don McLeroy actively inject a political ideology into the 2010 TEKS, but there is enough evidence to describe this ideology as ‘neo-Confederate’ thereby linking his efforts during his time on the Texas SBOE with the modern neo-Confederate effort to control the content of textbooks. My conclusion is that Don McLeroy was able to utilize an almost fail-safe strategy to inject neo-Confederate dogma into the U.S. history curriculum because he could exploit the composition of the SBOE with which he could assure a majority 90% of the time. Of course, because of the nature of partisan elections, what made this all possible was the Texan electorate; an electorate for the most part composed out of white-collar suburbanites with lingering segregationist worldviews in a post-segregationist society.

Ultimately, Don McLeroy and other members of the conservative bloc of the Texas State Board of Education let their political agenda dictate their revision of the social studies curriculum and accordingly, were the subject of ridicule and criticism by the media as well as historians. But was swaying the content of the curriculum according to their political affiliation not also exactly the job they were democratically chosen to do? As long as Texas lets politicians dictate their state’s curriculum standards instead of educational experts, seats on the SBOE will be available to anyone with enough electoral support. Historians have an easy job of judging politicians for their actions in the past but without changing the way the members of the SBOE are elected, what can be done to keep politics out of the
curriculum in the future?

As mentioned before, historians have spoken out before, but could not prevent many amendments they opposed from being included in the 2010 TEKS revision. In short term, the only thing historians can do to oppose this process is to call attention to the dangers of distorting history and the value of enhancing the historical education of schoolchildren above propagating a political agenda. In the long term, big steps should be taken to alter the selection procedure as well as the selection requirements of the SBOE. As the SBOE has the power to determine the historical curriculum, they must be considered a part of the historical profession and must therefore be held accountable to the same standards as responsible historians set out to observe. In this vein, institutional safeguards should be established that prevent political or religious agendas from dictating what is taught in American classrooms.
“Texas has been the butt of jokes for some time,” he said. “This certainly doesn’t help.”203

- Dan Quinn

Dismissive responses to the outcome of the revision of the social studies TEKS by the SBOE in 2010 were almost immediate. Critics emerged even before the new curriculum was approved. But all the national attention and outrage does not seem to have awakened the Texas education system.

On the first of March this year, 68-year old retired schoolteacher Mary Lou Bruner received 48 percent of the vote in a three-person GOP primary for a seat on the Texas SBOE. Bruner is not a stranger to the Texas SBOE. In 2010, she stood before the board to talk about textbooks. During her testimony, she expressed her concern that “the Middle Easterners” were influencing the content of Texas textbooks by buying the textbooks en masse.204

That was five years ago, now she is poised to win the GOP primaries. Despite what her age might suspect, Bruner is quite a active user of social media. On Facebook, Bruner has shared her views on some subjects. In June last year, she argued that climate change had nothing to do with weather or climate and that it was instead all about a system change from “free enterprise” to “communism”. Climate change was a just one big hoax and the personal idea of Karl Marx himself.205


204 Ibidem.

On the subject of the Civil War, Bruner wrote:

“Slavery was not the Reason for the Civil War. Historians waited until all of the people who were alive during the Civil War and the Restoration were dead of old age. Then historians wrote the history books to tell the story the way they wanted it told.”

Last October, Bruner posted on Facebook that president Barack Obama used to be a gay prostitute in order to pay for his drug addiction. “Since he supports gay marriage, he should be proud of his background as a homosexual/bisexual. He is against everything else Christians stand for, he might as well be for infidelity,” she explained.

According to her campaign website, when elected, Bruner will “Promote conservative curriculum standards aligned with Texas values”, “Advocate for return to traditional education”, and “Protect the children’s textbook fund from lobbyists”.206 Anyone who would like to get involved in Bruner’s campaign is invited to pray for her campaign and schools daily, an activity for which her website conveniently provides a prayer:

“Lord, We ask You to show us where we as Christians and as a nation have fallen short of the mark allowing our government leaders to pass evil and ungodly laws which displease God. Please reveal to us where we as a nation went wrong, and what we should do now to get the USA back on course. Please help us to earn the favor and blessings of God again as a nation.

[...]

We acknowledge we as mere men and women can do nothing without God. And we will give God the honor and the glory for any successes we have in repairing the damages we have caused by allowing sin to dominate our nation and our government and cloud the minds of our leaders. Amen.”207

207 Bruner, “Prayer for my website”, Campaign Website.
Remarkably, Bruner will likely represent the same district as her predecessor Don McLeroy. Unremarkably, she is endorsed by the Eagle Forum and the Tea Party.\footnote{Bruner, “Endorsements”, Campaign Website.}
## Appendix A: List of used abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AHA</td>
<td>American Historical Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATPCC</td>
<td>American Tea Party Constitutional Coalition</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Christian-American Parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Concerned Citizens</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Council of Conservative Citizens</td>
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<td>ERA</td>
<td>Equal Rights Amendment</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAR</td>
<td>Grand Army of the Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOP</td>
<td>Grand Old Party, nickname of the Republican Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTA</td>
<td>Parent Teachers Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBOE</td>
<td>State Board of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPLC</td>
<td>Southern Poverty Law Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEA</td>
<td>Texas Education Agency</td>
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<td>TEKS</td>
<td>Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSHA</td>
<td>Texas State Historical Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDC</td>
<td>United Daughters of the Confederacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>UT</td>
<td>University of Texas</td>
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# Appendix B: Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Mel and Norma Gabler start their campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Founding of the Eagle Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Kanawha County textbook riots</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Founding of the League of the South</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Don McLeroy first elected to the Texas SBOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Don McLeroy wins second term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>“Teach the controversy” campaign started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Don McLeroy wins third term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Don McLeroy is appointed as chair of the SBOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Texas SBOE Science TEKS revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Beginning of the Tea Party movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Don McLeroy is reappointed as chair of the SBOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Don Mc Leroy’s reappointment is halted by the Senate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Texas SBOE first discusses social studies revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>First meeting of the SBOE (Social Science TEKS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Second meeting of the SBOE (Social Science TEKS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Third meeting of the SBOE (Social Science TEKS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Final adoption of the revised TEKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Texas SBOE approves new history textbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>New history textbooks in use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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