

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT S. 534

THE RESTORE AMERICA'S FOUNDATION ACT



S. 534 sets very specific curricular requirements for teaching U.S. history that erases the perspectives of Black Americans and Native Americans.

- Requires teaching of “the Native American legend of [George Washington’s] divine protection.”
- Requires that “each year, prior to Thanksgiving, all public schools shall read the original account of the first Thanksgiving feast as recorded by pilgrim Edward Winslow.
- Requires that the State Superintendent prescribe texts and online materials “aligned with the principles and concepts of Trump’s 1776 Commission report” to public institutions of higher learning and public schools.

This legislation could require teaching an inaccurate and biased history that potentially limits diverse perspectives and significant topics.

- The bill includes no requirement to teach about the Black codes, Jim Crow, the Trail of Tears, or any Black history or Native American history from the perspective of Black Americans or Native Americans
- The bill requires teaching the connection between the American Revolution and its ideals as aligned with “the abolition of slavery, and the campaign for women’s rights, including the Seneca Falls Convention, passage of the thirteenth and nineteenth amendments and Dr. Martin Luther King.” Given the rampant discrimination against Black people and women at that time, this ahistorical opinion is not grounded in actual facts.

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- The bill requires educators to teach “the Articles of Confederation as a cooperative compact between independent republics” and “the implementation of republican ideals in law, including the protection of natural and civil rights, exemplified by the Virginia Bill of Rights and the emergence of antislavery sentiment,” even though Virginia, a slave state, seceded from the Union, and its capital Richmond was a capital of the Confederacy.
- The bill requires the State Superintendent of Education to ensure that all curricular materials are aligned to the January 2021 report of President Trump’s 1776 Commission, which has been condemned by the American Historical Association.

The 1776 Report was issued under the Trump Administration at a time when individuals across the country, of all races and backgrounds, were coming to recognize the history of racism in the United States and its ongoing effects. It represents a politically-motivated push to deny the truth of racism throughout our nation’s history and to censor honest conversations about race in America. The report states that so-called “patriotic education that teaches the truth about America” is key to “national renewal.” It includes revisionist historical claims such as, “[t]he three-fifths compromise was proposed by an antislavery delegate to prevent the South from counting their slaves as whole persons for purposes of increasing their congressional representation.”

- The bill may overhaul the state’s social studies standards without seeking critical input—circumvents South Carolina’s normal process of collaboratively drafting the standards with classroom educators, district leaders and other key education stakeholders and reviewing feedback from the public before adopting.

Every student should have the right to receive an accurate and inclusive education. Truthful and inclusive discussions about United States and South Carolina history, as well as current events pertaining to ongoing race and gender inequalities, are essential to quality academic instruction.

S. 534 demonstrates a distrust of teachers’ ability to teach U.S. history, replacing the judgment of trained and certified educators with those of politicians. This legislation may limit students’ and educators’ freedom of speech and the free exchange of ideas, classroom discourse, and the analysis it facilitates. This bill’s potential silencing of honest discussions of our country’s history could deny the experiences of Black, Indigenous, other people of color, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals.



Defend South Carolina educators, students, and truth in education by voting **NO** on **S. 534**.