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Bill to Include Gay Rights Movement Info in California Textbooks Clears Hurdle

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The California Legislature could soon pass a bill that would require school textbooks and teachers to incorporate information on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Americans into their curriculum.

The Fair, Accurate, Inclusive and Respectful Education Act, or SB48 [1], which mimics a bill previously vetoed by then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, made it one step closer to becoming law Tuesday after being approved by the state's Senate Judiciary Committee.

The bill, introduced by state Sen. Mark Leno, could have a nationwide impact if passed because California is such a big buyer of textbooks that publishers often incorporate the state's standards into books distributed to other states.

Supporters say that's a good thing because it will help prevent gay students from being harassed or bullied by their classmates.

But critics say SB48 is just an attempt to brainwash students into becoming pro-gay political activists and ensure that government, not parents, has the final word on teaching kids about moral values.

“Most textbooks don’t include any historical information about the LGBT movement, which has great significance to both California and U.S. history,” Leno said in a statement. “Our collective silence on this issue perpetuates negative stereotypes of LGBT people and leads to increased bullying of young people.”

Leno told FoxNews.com that California school districts that have included the historical contributions of LGBT people and the LGBT movement in their curriculum have seen reduced rates of bullying and violence among students.

He said the bill aspires to achieve the same results statewide by adding LGBT to the existing list of underrepresented cultural and ethnic groups, which are covered by current law related to inclusion in textbooks and other instructional materials in schools.

“Furthermore, SB 48 will reduce bullying by ensuring that discriminatory bias and negative stereotypes based on sexual orientation are prohibited in school activities, instruction and classroom materials,” Carolyn Laub, executive director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network [2], which helped draft the bill, said in a statement.
Critics object to the bill on several accounts, saying it undermines parental authority, promotes gender confusion and experimentation, inappropriately classifies LGBT as a cultural ethnic group, and aims to brainwash children into adopting the LGBT community’s political agenda.

“This is teaching children from kindergarten on up that the homosexual, bisexual, transsexual lifestyle is something to admire and consider for themselves,” Randy Thomasson, president of SaveCalifornia.com [3], a group advocating against the bill, told FoxNews.com.

Thomasson said teachers should teach about homosexuals’ historical accomplishments but should not be forced to mention their sexual orientation.

“Teach them about the good behavior, the noble things that people have done, but you don’t have to go into what they do sexually… True history focuses on the

accomplishments of people; it doesn't talk about what they did in the bedroom."

Thomasson also complained that the bill does not allow for teachers to discuss the opposition to the LGBT movement or warn against "the negative consequences, that male homosexuality is the largest transmitter of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases."

"So this isn't even about history, this is about, 'Hey, join the movement now. We need more children to become soldiers in the fight against religious freedom, parental rights, marriage for a man and a woman, the boy scouts, you name it.'"

Jim Carroll, President of Equality California [4], which also helped draft the bill, denied that it aims to recruit students into the LGBT movement.

"And I don't believe that by teaching about the black panthers for instance, that any school teacher could be accused of recruiting for that radical organization," Carroll told FoxNews.com.

Carroll admitted that teachers would not be allowed to say things like "some believe homosexuality is an unhealthy lifestyle, the same way that you couldn't talk about the civil rights movement but then say something discriminatory about African Americans."

But he said that people's sexual orientation would be used only as a way of identifying them.

"It would be difficult to teach about the women's movement without mentioning that Susan B. Anthony was a woman, it would be difficult to teach about the black civil rights movement without talking about Martin Luther King Jr. being black, it would be impossible to talk about the LGBT movement without saying Harvey Milk was gay or Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin were lesbians," Carroll said. "… We're not asking people to talk about what they did in the bedroom, but their sexuality is relevant in terms of why you would discuss them in an educational environment."

Leno added that the State Department would work with local school districts and the public to determine what changes should be made "and then, only at the next

printing of the textbook, will this change, along with probably many others, be incorporated into the textbook, so no additional cost to the state."

Opposing groups like SaveCalifornia.com and Concerned Parents United have launched letter-writing campaigns [5], asking critics to garner more opposition from their neighbors, religious leaders, local PTAs and lawmakers in hopes of persuading the governor and other lawmakers to oppose the bill.

Leno said the SB48 "will get to the floor of the Senate by late May; we hope that it will make its way to the
assembly for similar review and to the governor's desk by late summer."

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