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Reuters
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A bill to require California public schools to teach the historical accomplishments of gay men and lesbians passed the state Legislature on Tuesday in what supporters call a first for the nation.

Governor Jerry Brown, a Democrat, has not said publicly whether he supports the bill, which he has 12 days to sign or veto once it reaches his desk later this month. If he takes no action, the measure would become law automatically.

The bill gained final passage from the state Assembly on a vote of 49-25, without a single Republican supporting it. The measure cleared the state Senate in April.

California already requires public schools to teach the contributions made to society by women and by racial and ethnic groups that were historically discriminated against, such as blacks, Latinos and Native Americans.

Supporters of the latest bill said it would simply include gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender individuals in that existing requirement, making it part of the curriculum in history and other social studies classes.

"It's unfair to leave out or exclude an entire portion of our population from history," said Carolyn Laub, executive director of San Francisco-based Gay-Straight Alliance Network.

The group, which supported the bill, said no other state has passed similar legislation requiring the teaching of gay and lesbian contributions to society.

In fact, Laub pointed to a bill that passed the Tennessee state Senate this year that would prohibit the state's schools from teaching about homosexuality before secondary school.

The Tennessee proposal, which detractors have nicknamed the "don't say gay bill," has still not passed the state House of Representatives.

California Assemblyman Donald Wagner is one of the Republicans who opposed the state's bill requiring teaching about the accomplishments of gays and lesbians.

"Writing these provisions into textbooks will further an agenda rather than teach facts," Wagner said. "When we do things, we politicize them because that's the nature of politics. We should leave education to the educators."

The bill was written by state Senator Mark Leno, an openly gay Democrat who represents San Francisco and surrounding communities.

Even if the bill is signed by the governor, it could be several years before California students start reading in textbooks about gay accomplishments.

The California Department of Education has said that, because of the fiscal crisis facing the state, the agency does not expect to adopt new textbooks until 2015.

http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/07/06/us-gay-education-c... [1]
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