



**California Council for the Social Studies**  
AN AFFILIATE OF NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

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October 1, 2009

Gene Wilhoit  
Council of Chief State School Officers  
Executive Director  
One Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20001-1431

Dear Mr. Wilhoit:

The California Council for the Social Studies, a state affiliate of the National Council for the Social Studies, is the leading voice for the promotion of high quality social studies education in California through service, advocacy, and leadership development. We believe that democratic values taught in K-12 social studies classrooms represent the bedrock of education and that public schools were purposely created to prepare young people to become educated, responsible, participating citizens.

It is unfortunate that social studies education has been marginalized in many schools across our nation in recent years as a result of many well-intentioned educational policies and practices. We also find that the adopted criteria for successful teaching and learning of social studies varies greatly from state to state as do the mechanisms for measuring student achievement. While some states are applauded for adopting rigorous content standards, others may have standards that lack depth and breadth of content and critical thinking skills. Some states' standards have a strong historical emphasis while others are richly balanced with the inclusion of strong economic, geographic, and civic education standards that strengthen students' ability to become critical thinkers, communicators, and problem solvers.

We believe that all students across our great nation deserve to have access to high quality social studies education that will provide them with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become effective, responsible citizens. While we support President Obama's proposed initiative to establish Common Core Standards for social studies, we believe your association should also include history/social studies standards in your deliberations about national, core standards. By bringing together social studies experts from the National Council for the Social Studies and other professional organizations, we can be assured that the final document will underscore the critical importance of social studies as an indispensable aspect of every child's educational experience.

Furthermore, if the Common Core Standards for Social Studies are framed from the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills to include critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills in the context of civic literacy, economic/financial literacy, and global awareness, students will become successful students of social studies and even more importantly, effective citizens and productive members of the domestic and global workforce.

The future of America and our democratic institutions depend on effective social studies teachers who provide each new generation with knowledge of our history and government, skills needed to make informed decisions about complex public issues, attitudes that support democratic practices, and commitment to engage in civic life. With the development and adoption of Common Core Standards in social studies, we can achieve this goal.

Sincerely,

*Cheryl Rehome-Dean*

Cheryl Rehome-Dean  
President  
California Council for the Social Studies