



For Immediate Release

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**Arkansas Council for the Social Studies (ACSS)**  
**Position Statement on HB1218 and HB1231**  
*Calls on Legislators to Pull Down Legislation and Meet  
with Stakeholders Before Moving Forward*

(Little Rock, Ark.) – The Arkansas Council for the Social Studies (ACSS) is a non-partisan professional organization dedicated to supporting educators in strengthening and advocating for social studies education. Our membership includes K-12 teachers, university faculty, curriculum specialists, administrators, and museum and archives staff from across the state.

ACSS President Olivia Lewis sent the following position statement to House Education Committee members today, saying, “We need to be loud and clear about what we stand for and how it will affect Arkansas classrooms.”

The following position statement was approved by the full ACSS Board representing the statewide organization as a whole:

“Social Studies education effectively has two main goals: **social understanding** and **civic competence**. Two bills were recently introduced into the 93rd Arkansas General Assembly that we believe directly challenge those goals and aim to subvert the intent of a free and public education. We respectfully call on the legislators who introduced these bills to please pull the bills from consideration or meet with the stakeholders they most directly impact before advancing them further before our state legislature.

**House Bill 1218**, “TO PROHIBIT OFFERING OF CERTAIN COURSES, EVENTS, AND ACTIVITIES REGARDING RACE, GENDER, POLITICAL AFFILIATION, SOCIAL CLASS, OR CERTAIN CLASSES OF PEOPLE; AND TO ADJUST FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS THAT OFFER CERTAIN COURSES, EVENTS, AND ACTIVITIES,” threatens to reduce students’ exposure to different cultures, groups, and viewpoints while in a school setting. Such courses, events, and activities lead to curiosity about the diverse range of people and viewpoints in our pluralistic society and cultivate empathy. “Culturally responsive instruction resides firmly within a pluralist vision of a society, recognizing that the cultures of different ethnic groups provide content worthy of inclusion in the curriculum.” One’s culture is a valuable trait of any community, or society as a whole, and must be acknowledged and respected to promote good citizenship.

**House Bill 1231**, “TO PROHIBIT THE USE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDS TO TEACH THE 1619 PROJECT CURRICULUM; AND TO REDUCE FUNDS DISTRIBUTED TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS THAT TEACH THE 1619 PROJECT CURRICULUM,” aims to censure comprehensive history education that is required for students to master historical thinking skills and evaluate multiple perspectives. Social studies teachers use secondary interpretations of history from different perspectives to talk about thesis statements, arguments, evidence, and interpretations, all of which are foundational skills of historical thinking. Legislation such as this aims to withhold necessary funds that schools rely on to function properly in order to promote an “approved” version of history that might fail to consider the experiences of all Americans.

Both bills convey a misunderstanding of history and social studies education as a set of static facts that teachers present to students. We know that social studies is crucial for civic life and career development, and thus students must be exposed to multiple types of primary and secondary sources of information so that they can learn how to evaluate arguments and evidence, read closely, research, write, and speak. These skills are the foundation for what social studies teachers do: cultivate informed citizens in a thriving democracy. Social studies teachers and students must have the opportunity to engage in inquiry and debate without fear of retaliation. “Political, religious, or philosophical beliefs of politicians, administrators, and members of the public cannot be imposed on students or faculty,” but instead, social studies classes at the K-12 and college levels must teach students how to locate, analyze, and critique primary and secondary sources from different places, times, and points of view to understand the people and ideas that are foundational to this country.”

For more information about ACSS, please visit  
<https://arkansascouncilforthesocialstudies.wildapricot.org> or like and follow the  
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