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One textbook absurdly portrays advocacy group as a science authority

An examination of how proposed social studies textbooks for Texas public schools address climate change reveals distortions and bias that misrepresent the broad scientific consensus on the phenomenon.

Climate education specialists at the National Center for Science Education (NCSE) examined the proposed textbooks, which publishers submitted for consideration by the State Board of Education (SBOE) in April. NCSE identified a number of errors as well as an exercise that absurdly equates a political advocacy group with a leading international science organization.

"The scientific debate over whether climate change is happening and who is responsible has been over for years, and the science textbooks Texas adopted last year make that clear," explained Dr. Minda Berbeco, a programs and policy director at NCSE. "Climate change will be a key issue that future citizens of Texas will need to understand and confront, and they deserve social studies textbooks that reinforce good science and prepare them for the challenges ahead."

NCSE's analysis is available at <http://ncse.com/files/Texas-social-studies-report-2014.pdf> [4]

The distortions and bias in the proposed social studies textbook are troubling, said Kathy Miller, president of the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund.

"In too many cases we're seeing publishers shade and even distort facts to avoid angering politicians who vote on whether their textbooks get approved," Miller said. "Texas kids deserve textbooks that are based on sound scholarship, not political biases."

NCSE's examination of the proposed textbooks noted a number of problematic passages dealing with the science of climate change. Among the problems:

* McGraw-Hill's Grade 6 textbook for world cultures and geography equates factually inaccurate arguments from the Heartland Institute, a group funded by Big Tobacco and polluters, with information from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). IPCC is a highly regarded international science organization that won a Nobel Peace Prize in 2007.

* A Pearson elementary school textbook tells students: "Scientists disagree about what is causing climate change." In fact, the vast majority—97 percent—of actively publishing climatologists and climate science papers agree that humans bear the main responsibility.

* WorldView Software's high school economics textbook includes an inaccurate and confusing section that misleadingly links tropical deforestation to the ozone hole.

These distortions of science raise concerns like those expressed in last year's science textbook adoption, when more than 50 scientific and educational societies signed a letter to the Texas SBOE stating: "climate change should not be undermined in textbooks, whether by minimizing, misrepresenting, or misleadingly singling [it] out as controversial or in need of greater scrutiny than other topics are given." That statement is available at: http://ncse.com/files/pub/evolution/states/2013_TX_SBOE_from_NCSE.pdf [5]

NCSE and the TFN Education Fund are calling on publishers to revise the problematic passages to ensure that political bias doesn't undermine the education of Texas students. On Tuesday the SBOE will hold its first public hearing on the new textbooks. The board will vote in November.

Last week the TFN Education Fund released a series of reports from scholars who have detailed other serious concerns about the proposed textbooks. An executive summary and those reports are available at <http://www.tfn.org/history> [6]

CONTACT: Robert Luhn, Director of Communications, NCSE, 510-601-7203, luhn@ncse.com [7]

Dan Quinn, Communications Director, TFNEF, 512-322-0545, dan@tfn.org [8]

The National Center for Science Education (NCSE) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to defending the teaching of evolution and climate change. The Texas Freedom Network Education Fund conducts research and citizen education in support of religious freedom, individual liberties and strong public schools.

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