

**SUBJECT:** Establishing a civic objective of public education

**COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 6 ayes — Grusendorf, Oliveira, Dawson, Eissler, Griggs, Hochberg  
0 nays  
3 absent — Branch, Dutton, Madden

**WITNESSES:** For — Ted Melina Raab, Texas Federation of Teachers  
Against — None

**BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 4.001(b) sets forth nine objectives of public education. The objectives outline state goals related to parental involvement, student potential, dropout prevention, a balanced curriculum, recruitment and retention of qualified teachers, performance standards, campus safety and discipline, innovation in teaching, and use of technology in the classroom.

Education Code, sec. 28.002 sets forth elements of the required curriculum. Sec. 28.002(h) directs the State Board of Education (SBOE) and individual school districts to include information on the free enterprise system in U.S. and Texas history classes. It states the primary purpose of the curriculum as preparing students to be “thoughtful, active citizens who understand the importance of patriotism and can function productively in a free enterprise society with appreciation for the basic democratic values of our state and national heritage.”

**DIGEST:** HB 319 would amend Education Code, sec. 4.001(b) to add an objective directing educators to “prepare students to be thoughtful, active citizens who have an appreciation for the basic values of our state and national heritage and who can understand and productively function in a free enterprise society.” The bill would apply beginning with the 2003-04 school year.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2003.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

HB 319 would reinforce the stated purpose of the public school curriculum and would provide clear direction to teachers, administrators, and textbook publishers regarding the objectives of public education in Texas. Curricular materials already should reflect American values of free markets, democracy, individual choice, and patriotism. The bill would enhance the state's overarching commitment to these values by stating them again clearly in the objectives of public education.

The goal of HB 319 relates to political efficacy rather than political advocacy. The American system is thoughtful, participatory, and nonpartisan, and it is proper to teach students how to function effectively in that system. Students who understand that their rights and responsibilities include voting, contacting their legislators, writing letters to the editor, and running for office will graduate to become more effective members of American society.

HB 319 would support the teaching of such free-enterprise principles as the rights of American workers to engage in collective bargaining. The United States' declared policy on labor relations supports the elimination of obstructions to the free flow of commerce and the protection of workers' rights to associate, organize, and designate representatives to negotiate employment terms and conditions on their behalf.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

HB 319 would open a Pandora's box by putting the state's sanction on a political agenda in the classroom. SBOE members and textbook reviewers often say that activist agendas are inappropriate and should be edited out of public school textbooks. If they are inappropriate in textbooks, they also should be inappropriate in the Education Code. This bill would set the tone for teachers, administrators, school boards, or state elected officials who wish to define the "correct" activist agenda for students.

The phrase "basic values" is vague and subjective. In Education Code, sec. 28.002(h), the wording is "basic democratic values." The wording in HB 319 would leave too much discretion to the education bureaucracy, rather than students and their parents, to define "basic values."

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OTHER  
OPPONENTS  
SAY:

HB 319 is unnecessary and redundant. Because similar language already exists in the portion of the Education Code dealing with curriculum, this bill simply would repeat something that is stated elsewhere.