
CENTER FOR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM

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March 3, 2003

Representative Barb Sykora
403 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

By fax to 651-296-5807

Dear Representative Sykora:

I write today on behalf of the Center for Individual Freedom, a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to protecting individual liberty and standing up for the Constitution, to voice our support for the proposed social studies standards now before the Education Policy Committee.

As you know, education statistics reveal that all too often American students are deficient in their understanding of their history and government. The Center believes that a meaningful knowledge of American government and the Constitution are essential if citizens are going to be truly free. People who understand how their government works, the scope of its authority, and their ability to influence decision-making are more active and effective members of our democracy. However, people who do not understand how their government works are not adequately equipped to monitor government actions, stand up for their rights, or speak out against government tyranny.

Unfortunately, today's schools are too often failing in their efforts to educate students on their history, their rights and the structure and authority of government. According to a National Assessment of Educational Progress study from 2001, fifty-seven percent of high school seniors could not even demonstrate a "basic" understanding of American history, while only 11 percent showed a "proficient" level of understanding. Likewise, the National Association of Scholars reported that today's college seniors have roughly the same level of civics knowledge as the high school seniors of 1955.

Minnesota's proposed social studies standards represent an outstanding effort to reverse this problem. They detail the critical knowledge that students must gain in order to be effective citizens, and they provide for meaningful accountability to ensure that students reach acceptable levels of understanding.

We urge you and your colleagues to authorize and implement these standards, as provided for in HF2558.

Sincerely,

[s]

Marshall Manson
Vice President of Public Affairs