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October 5, 2016

Social Studies Standards Recommendation Committee
c/o Tennessee State Board of Education
710 James Robertson Parkway, 1st floor
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Committee Members,

We write to you to express concern regarding the published first draft of the state social studies standards which were recently made public. We are particularly alarmed with how many references to Tennessee history and geography appear to have been removed — especially in grades 1, 4, 5, 8 and the U.S. history class taught in high school.

Tennessee history is critically important to the civic health of our state. The study of history is how we know ourselves as a people. Tennessee cannot go forward productively as a state if our citizens do not have a basic understanding of where we have been as a state.

We believe it is vital that students know the Tennessee story and understand how Tennessee has played a key part in national events such as westward migration, the Civil War, World War II and the Civil Rights Movement.

Tennessee history is not trivia. Understanding our history helps students make connections between the world and their home state encouraging civic pride. This is why the Tennessee General Assembly supports museums and historical attractions across the state. This is why we support events such as Tennessee History Day, and why we are happy to see Tennessee State Parks do more living history, restore sites such as Fort Loudoun and develop small historical museums throughout the state. This is why we are thrilled that a new \$160 million Tennessee State Museum is being built.

Tennessee public schools previously required a separate class on Tennessee history. That class was downgraded to elective status about 15 years ago. Since that time, members of the Tennessee General Assembly have been assured that Tennessee history lessons would still be taught, imbedded into U.S. history classes taught in grades 4, 5, 8 and 11.

We believe that this system has worked helping students better understand Tennessee's connection to the history of our nation and the world.

If this rough draft of the social studies standards were adopted, it would represent a break with this 15-year understanding between the Board of Education and the Tennessee General Assembly.

We therefore ask that the Social Studies Standards Review Committee restore Tennessee history events, stories and names to the standards in grades 4, 5, 8 and 11. We ask you to make sure that all public school students in Tennessee have an understanding of how American history has been affected by Tennessee, and how major events in American history have been reflected in Tennessee.

Thank you for your time and consideration to this important matter.

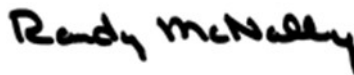
Sincerely,



Ron Ramsey
Lieutenant Governor
Speaker of the Senate



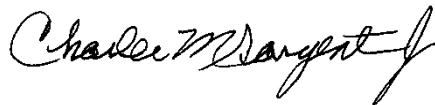
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Senate Majority Leader



Sen. Randy McNally
Chairman, Senate Finance, Ways & Means



Rep. Steve McDaniel
House Deputy Speaker



Rep. Charles Sargent
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