



## NATIONAL COALITION FOR HISTORY

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September 3, 2014

Ms. Helen Odom Rice  
Chairwoman  
Georgia State Board of Education  
2070 Twin Towers East  
205 Jesse Hill, Jr. Drive SE  
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Ms. Rice:

The National Coalition for History (NCH) is a consortium of over 55 organizations that advocates on federal legislative and regulatory issues. The coalition is made up of diverse groups representing historians, archivists, researchers, teachers, students, political scientists, museum professionals, genealogists, and other stakeholders. Several of NCH's members are national groups with missions centered solely on K-12 history education. NCH is writing to express our concerns over the current controversy surrounding the issuance of the new framework for the Advance Placement (AP) in U.S. History exam issued by The College Board.

Critics of the new framework contend that its authors are engaging in "revisionist history" that leaves out the contributions of major historical figures and paints America in a negative light. Disagreement over the interpretation of history is inevitable and healthy. History is, by its very nature, evolving. Thanks to the energetic work of historians exploring archives and engaging in a process of discovery, we are constantly enriching our understanding of the past and our recognition of the significance of our predecessors. New sources of information sharpen our knowledge of the conditions our founding fathers and every succeeding generation faced and the decisions they made. History textbooks read by previous generations of students have been rendered nearly obsolete by new questions demanding answers and fresh knowledge with which to answer them.

While different takes on the past may engender honest disagreement and debate, we can all agree about the need for a responsible process to establish and implement educational goals. The AP History framework was developed over a 7-year period by professionals of good faith and good will in the field and peer reviewed by a diverse group of 400 high school AP history teachers and 58 college professors with expertise in U.S. history. It is a framework that offers expert guidance while providing individual teachers with flexibility to adapt their AP courses to state standards and local concerns.

There is ample room for those of all political persuasions and educational philosophies to work together in a collaborative spirit to provide the next generation of Americans with a first rate education in the humanities and social sciences, especially in American history. In 2013, at the

behest of Congress, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences issued a report on “the importance of the humanities and social sciences to the future of our nation.” The report underscored how our nation’s founders knew that a “government bound by law and rooted in the consent of the governed—depends on citizens who can think critically, understand their own history, and give voice to their beliefs while respecting the views of others.”

We are all in favor of an educational system that yields such an informed citizenry capable of respecting a wide range of perspectives on the past. Careful reading of the standards suggests that much of the material that critics fear has been excluded has in fact been incorporated into the AP History Framework. There is also ample opportunity for professional educators to include material that is of particular concern in their states and communities. The prudent integration of critical thinking skills with state-of-the-art historical knowledge in the framework nurtures in our students a lively, thoughtful dialogue with the past.

As Americans and as educators, we share the goal of ensuring that high school students receive the well-rounded education that will make them ready for “college, career, and citizenship” upon graduation. Rather than a rejection of tradition, the new AP framework builds on our profession's longstanding commitment to encourage and cultivate in students the ability to contextualize information and to create and analyze arguments based on evidence. These critical skills in historical thinking are valuable tools that students will apply to their subjects—and to their lives. Employers often declare that these are some of the essential skills they seek when appraising job candidates. The AP revisions aim at the enhancement of precisely those skills.

The National Coalition for History supports the College Board’s new framework. While no document is perfect, the current guidelines are an important step forward in helping teachers to prepare future citizens for a 21<sup>st</sup>-century global economy.

Sincerely,



John R. Dichtl  
NCH Policy Board President



Lee White  
NCH Executive Director