

Testimony before the Education Committee, May 1, 2019
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My name is Mark DeCoursey. I have spent the last 30 as a software engineer. My wife was a schoolteacher, and a freelance writer and editor for the last few decades of her life.

In 2010 when we lived in Redmond WA, we volunteered to tutor school children under the King County Study Zone program. Every week for six years, we tutored school students from kindergarten through 12th grade in all subjects, particularly Math, Reading, Writing, and History.

In the course of that work, though we were in the Lake Washington school district, one of the best in the state, we were appalled at the poor education that those children were getting. Some high school students could barely read. Many had only a fumble grasp of basic grammar. A number of Algebra students were still adding and subtracting by counting on their fingers, and were not capable of multiplication. The problems were widespread and across all subjects.

According to US News and World Report, Washington ranks at #6 for education quality in America. And according to that same report, Oregon ranks at #34, way down the list. (<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/education>)

Why are the schools doing so badly? Well, there are the usual reasons of money, family problems, drugs, gangs, bullying, and so on and so on.

But this bill will not improve the situation. To fully honor the principles of equal justice and diversity, we cannot teach just about the Nazi camps. We will have to teach about all the holocausts in history. And gentlemen, there have been many in the last few centuries. Let me name a few for you, and please pardon me if I have omitted a travesty that your personal people has suffered:

1. Holodomor, the starvation holocaust in the Ukraine in 1932-33.
2. The Armenian genocide in Turkey in 1915.
3. The massacre of the Cossacks at Lienz in 1945.
4. The Red Terror in Russia starting 1918.
5. Deliberate starvation of thousands of Germans in camps in the years after the Second World War.
6. The completely unnecessary atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.
7. The Rwandan massacre in 1994.
8. The Khmer Rouge killing fields between 1975 and 1979.
9. The Leninist and Stalinist purges during the 1920s and 1930s
10. The Maoist massacres in China in the 1950s.
11. The genocide of Native Americans in the 1700s and 1800s.

12. The genocide of the Aztecs and Incas in the 1500s.
13. The Irish potato famine in 1845 to 1849.
14. The Mfecane massacres between 1815 and 1840 in Africa.
15. The genocide of the Australian and Tasmanian Aboriginals.
16. The Russian extermination of native Siberians.
17. Some say the mass enslavement of Africans was a Holocaust, because it partially exterminated their African culture.

More than 100 million people died in World War II, most of them innocent victims. Yet we have no anti-war education laws, and the wars go on and on.

The schools are already struggling to teach the children to read, write, and do numbers. If you force our schools cover all the holocausts, they will never get around to teaching the children to read and write.

Therefore, I beg of you not to burden the schools with political bills to satisfy special interests. Hold the line. Pass laws, if you must, to make children learn to read, write, and work with numbers. But if you open the door to preaching about holocausts, the principles of diversity and equal justice will entangle the schools in sectarian politics with no time for real schooling.

If the students learn to read, they can go out in the world and teach themselves the many things they must know to be good citizens in American society.

Thank you.