

State may drop some TN history from classroom

Becca Habegger, WBIR 5:23 PM. EST October 04, 2016

KNOXVILLE - Proposed changes to the Tennessee social studies curriculum would remove some key moments in Tennessee history from the classroom.

Those include certain Civil War battles and figures, part of the Tennessee women's suffrage movement, author Alex Haley and his novel "Roots" and other events during the Civil Rights Movement.

This comes as the state Board of Education is looking to revise its social studies standards. Through Oct. 28, the Tennessee BOE is inviting the public to review and comment on the proposed changes at <https://apps.tn.gov/tcas/>.

This is the second round of public comments in this curriculum revision process. "The initial social studies standards review website was made available for public comment last winter," according to a press release from the state.

Thousands of people reviewed and commented on the initial proposed changes. Then, over the summer, educator advisory teams reviewed the comments as they continued to tinker with the proposed changes.

After this second and final round of public comment wraps up, "the Standards Recommendation Committee (SRC), appointed by the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of the House of Representatives, will review and suggest additional changes," the release said.

The state BOE will vote on the final revisions early next year. If approved, the changes would go into effect for the 2019-2020 school year.

Stewart Waters, an assistant professor of social science education at UT, was among those reviewing the changes over the summer.

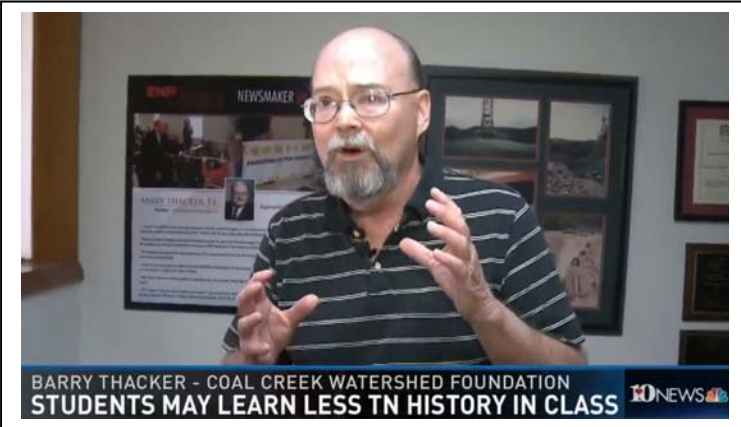
"I think teachers are going to like the standards quite a bit because they're not nearly as dense as they once were," he told WBIR 10News on Tuesday. "It's much more to-the-point and direct, but there is, obviously, going to be a lot of content missing when you do that." That missing content, he said, includes much state history.

"In the past, there may have been a Tennessee history course that people have taken, so it's going to be shocking to them to see that there's not going to be a Tennessee history course and that, in fact, there are only going to be tidbits of Tennessee history integrated throughout the standards of K-12," Stewart said.



He thinks the public input period is good and hopes people take advantage of it. "I've never really seen a state that's really opened up their standards to this level of critique from the public and the community at large," Stewart said. "I think it's important that (people) take part in the process and let (the state) know, honestly, what they feel about the standards and what can make them better."

Barry Thacker is among those voicing his opinion to the state, and his is one of concern. "When you read about somebody from Tennessee, from right here in your own home, who did something important, it gives you a sense of pride in yourself and your community, and that needs to be preserved," Thacker said.



Thacker and his organization, the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation, want kids to learn about important events in East Tennessee's past.

"Most people think that slavery ended with the Civil War in Tennessee, but it didn't. It ended with the Coal Creek War," Thacker said, explaining how miners from Coal Creek - now known as Rocky Top - "were

instrumental in ending convict leasing at a time when prison, labor and civil rights activists failed in such attempts, thus making Tennessee the first Southern state to do so."

Gov. Bill Haslam, speaking to 10News Tuesday, said the social studies curriculum revision is far from set-in-stone.

"As somebody who's, you know, a historian by heart and by degree, history matters a lot to me," he said. "I think what we have to do for our teachers, though, is make certain we have realistic expectations of what all they can teach during a semester."

The state conducted a similar process in recent years, when reviewing curriculum for English/language arts and math.

People can review and comment on the proposed changes to social studies curriculum at <https://apps.tn.gov/tcas/>.



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