



INTERFAITH
ALLIANCE
PROTECTING FAITH AND FREEDOM

REV. DR. C. WELTON GADDY
President

March 22, 2010

Mr. Barry O'Callaghan
Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
222 Berkeley Street
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Mr. O'Callaghan,

On behalf of Interfaith Alliance and our 185,000 members nationwide who come from more than 75 different faith traditions, I write to urge you to stand up for the right of America's students to receive a quality education, based on the facts, by rejecting the Texas State Board of Education's (Texas SBOE) latest changes to its social studies curriculum. As both a Christian minister and the president of an organization committed to the protection of faith *and* freedom, I am deeply concerned by the Texas SBOE's misguided, erroneous characterization of the separation of church and state in America and their attempts to misrepresent the role of Christianity in our nation. Nothing less than the integrity of our children's education and their future are at stake.

On March 11, 2010, the Texas SBOE voted on several amendments to the state social studies, world history and U.S. government curricula. The most egregious of these votes struck down an amendment that would have enabled students to gain an understanding of "the reasons the Founding Fathers protected religious freedom in America by barring government from promoting or disfavoring any particular religion over all others." This amendment failed because several conservative members of the Board embrace the revisionist propaganda that the Founders did *not* intend there to be separation between institutions of religion and institutions of government and thus concluded that the proposed amendment was "not historically accurate."

Furthermore, proposals by the conservative Christian bloc of the Texas SBOE would change our children's understanding of the origins of American history. Through several amendments, the Texas SBOE proposes to teach our children not that we are a pluralistic democracy, founded as a safe haven for minorities and the freedom of religion, but instead the fallacious notion that we are a "Christian nation," founded upon and governed by Christian beliefs.

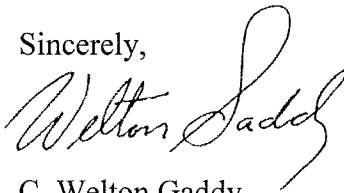
The tragic decisions made by the Texas SBOE go beyond issues of church-state relations. One amendment passed by the board incorporated the study of the "right to bear arms" in the curriculum on First Amendment rights and free expression, regardless of the fact that this right is not one of the five freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment and is

already covered by study of the Second Amendment. Yet another curriculum amendment removed Thomas Jefferson from students' study of the Enlightenment though he is undoubtedly one of the leading American scholars of that era; it is a shame that children in Texas will not learn of his contributions on behalf of our country.

Sadly, after these changes are approved in May, children in Texas will be presented with a picture of our history that is historically inaccurate. I know that the state of Texas is a major consumer of your textbooks, but I call upon you to reject these erroneous, ill-advised changes and maintain your commitment to an accurate education of superior quality for our nation's children; I urge you to ensure that they receive a better education, one that is not shaped by narrow-minded opinions that are being passed off as fact. Our children deserve the best, most accurate educational resources possible, so that they have an opportunity to receive the best education possible, and part of that education is learning the true meaning of the First Amendment, of the religious freedom we hold dear as Americans – a freedom that has made our great nation what it is today.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you need our support in resisting this pressure from the Texas SBOE to replace American history with conservative ideology, we would be honored to stand by you and support your commitment to the most accurate educational materials possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "C. Welton Gaddy". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

C. Welton Gaddy

Cc: Mike Lavelle, President, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt K-12 Publishers