

Florida "Judeo-Christian" Curriculum Critics

Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF):

- In April of 2021, FFRF put out an action alert calling on its members to oppose changes to the Florida curriculum. It claimed these standards were introduced to promote Christian nationalism, and FFRF called on its supporters to contact the Florida Department of Education to derail efforts to reform the curriculum.
- In the action alert, FFRF claims "the problematic new proposal for 7th grade reads: Recognize how Judeo-Christian values influenced America's founding ideals and documents, students will analyze the degree of civic participation inherent in these civilizations, students will identify Judeo-Christian values (e.g., rule of law, God-given rights, equality of mankind, limited government, separation of powers, consent of the governed) in founding documents, students will recognize the influence of the Protestant work ethic on economic freedom and personal responsibility, students will recognize the influence of the Ten Commandments on establishing the rule of law in America, [and] students will explain what is meant by "All men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."
- In the same action alert, FFRF warns that "the 9th grade curriculum is more compact, but basically identical: [Student will] analyze the influence of Judeo-Christian values on America's founding ideals and documents, [and] students will recognize Judeo-Christian principles of law and government in primary sources (e.g., rule of law, God-given rights, equality of mankind, limited government, separation of powers, consent of the governed) in primary sources."
- In April of 2012, FFRF released the statement "Dispelling the Myth of 'School Choice'." The piece attacks school choice programs, in part, because they take money for public education and give it to private schools who promote Judeo-Christian values. According to FFRF, any school promoting Judeo-Christian values is incapable of teaching students.

Ryan D. Jayne, attorney for FFRF:

- The "proposal would require seventh graders to 'recognize the influence of the Ten Commandments on establishing the rule of law in America' —

which, actually, is none at all.... [T]he proposal makes the all-too-common mistake of presupposing that the 'big ten' must be the foundation of modern law. "

- "Both the U.S. and the Florida Constitutions prohibit laws 'respecting an establishment of religion,' meaning the government must not take sides on religious debates. Public schools cannot present the government as a Christian or 'Judeo-Christian' entity."
- "Such measures are un-American and antithetical to true religious freedom and need to be condemned."

American Atheists:

- In April of 2021, American Atheists opposed changes to the Florida curriculum. It claimed these standards were introduced to promote Christian nationalism. Particularly, American Atheists objected to teaching 7th graders to "recognize how Judeo-Christian values influenced America's founding ideals and documents." Students would be required to learn about the Ten Commandments, 'the Protestant work ethic,' and various supposedly 'Judeo-Christian' values.
- Equally concerning for the organization, the standards also required 9th graders to "analyze the influence of Judeo-Christian values on America's founding ideals and documents." Specifically, students would be taught that core principles of American governance, such as limited government and separation of powers are actually 'Judeo-Christian' values. They encouraged their members to contact the Florida Department of Education to derail efforts to reform the curriculum.

Jocelyn Williamson, Central Florida Freethought Community:

- "The standards go beyond the typical American exceptionalism and will teach our kids 'Judeo-Christian' exceptionalism."
- "[T]he First Commandment reads 'you shall have no other gods before me.' But isn't this exactly the opposite of the First Amendment, which reads 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof'? Nothing could be less 'civic-minded' than denying the First Amendment."

- "By injecting greater religion into public education while attacking reproductive healthcare and undermining LGBTQ equality, extremists hope to give a narrow, religiously conservative viewpoint legitimacy and the opportunity to thrive using the machinery of our secular government."
- "There is no need to include the Ten Commandments, the Hebrew Bible, Judeo-Christian values, and the Protestant work ethic in Florida civics education."
- "Rewriting history and indoctrinating children into these false, Christian nationalist narratives undermines a fundamental American principle that actually should be in these standards; the separation between state and church. Because without freedom from religion, there can be no freedom of religion."

Brandon T. Jett, Professor of History, Florida SouthWestern State College:

- "A strong civics literacy program must grapple with racism in America's past."
- "It is impossible to engage with the Declaration without grappling with questions of racial inequality and racism."
- "Sustained engagement with the Constitution should also be the bedrock of any civics literacy program. Even here, it is impossible to avoid issues related to race and inequality."
- "[A] good civics literacy program cannot simply ignore issues related to racism and sugar-coat the narrative. It is impossible. Racism is too bound up in American history to extricate it from civics education."

Carrie Feit, Women's March Florida:

- She argues that the standards "ignore the country's history of 'oppression' and the experience of Black Americans and indigenous people. She also said they wrongly equated patriotism as an 'allegiance to the flag.'"
- "One of the new second grade standards says, 'Students will explain why reciting the Pledge of Allegiance daily is an act of patriotism.'"

Criticism from Public Comments:

- "Some, including teachers, who read earlier drafts of the standards worried the new standards were partisan, added religious beliefs into the curriculum and suggested the United States had never done anything wrong."
- "'Just as we don't want to teach children to hate their country, we also don't want to teach them that we have not ever committed offenses,' one person wrote on a department survey on the standards in April."
- "'What will be the process when families challenge the religious injection into the Civics curriculum?' wrote another."