

David Randall, NAS/Civics Alliance: Testimony, Ohio HB 103

My name is David Randall and I am the Director of Research of the National Association of Scholars and the Executive Director of the Civics Alliance. The National Association of Scholars and the Civics Alliance work to ensure that every state has academic standards that promote first-rate education and protect school children from political indoctrination. We promote reform of content standards in every state, along the lines modeled by the Civics Alliance's *American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards*.

NAS and the Civics Alliance are delighted that Representatives Don Jones and Tracy Richardson have introduced House Bill 103—and that Representatives Brett Hudson Hillyer, Gayle Manning, Gail K. Pavliga, Jean Schmidt, and Bill Seitz have joined them as co-sponsors.

HB 103 would create the Ohio Social Studies Standards Task Force, which would be charged to use *American Birthright* as the basis for new K-12 social studies standards for Ohio, along with documents including the Declaration of Independence, the Northwest Ordinance, the Constitution of the United States with emphasis on the Bill of Rights, and the Ohio Constitution.

American Birthright teaches students to *identify* the ideals, institutions, and individual examples of human liberty, individualism, religious freedom, and republican self-government; *assess* the extent to which civilizations have fulfilled these ideals; and *describe* how the evolution of these ideals in different times and places has contributed to the formation of modern American ideals. Above all, *American Birthright* teaches about the expansion of American liberty to include all Americans, the contributions that Americans from every walk of life have made to our shared history of liberty, America's championship of liberty throughout the world, and heroes of liberty such as Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ronald Reagan.

We are honored that Representatives Jones and Richardson have introduced a bill that would make *American Birthright* the basis for Ohio's new K-12 social studies standards. We crafted *American Birthright* to model improved social studies education, which would appeal to a broad majority of Americans. It is wonderful that elected representatives should judge that *American Birthright* will forward the education of their state's students.

We also are grateful to Representative Jones and Richardson, and to the legislative draftsmen on their staffs. When we published *American Birthright*, we did not include a precise legislative means by which state legislators could put it into effect. HB 103 provides that means. HB 103, moreover, includes several excellent features.

- HB 103 makes *American Birthright* the *basis* for new social studies standards, not a rigid framework, and charges the task force to adapt it while seeking broad public input. It thereby ensures that *American Birthright* will be adapted to fit Ohio's particular needs.
- The task force's draft standards will have to be approved by the education committees of both legislative houses, and then pass by concurrent resolution in both legislative chambers. The new standards will need broad political support to be approved—but the use of the concurrent resolution ensures that the standards will be approved swiftly, once that broad political support has been acquired.
- The standards will be in effect for five years—at which point, they will be subject to review by a new task force. This provision ensures that there will be a timely opportunity to improve the standards, informed by experience of how they work in the classroom.

The National Association of Scholars and the Civics Alliance heartily endorse HB 103, and we urge Ohio's legislators to pass this bill and Governor DeWine to sign it.