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# Texas textbooks approved, but debate continues

AUSTIN (AP) — For State Board of Education member Mary Helen Berlanga, Texas history is changing for the better.

The Corpus Christi Democrat says she's pleased textbook publishers have agreed to add more references to Hispanic and black history makers to Texas social studies books. The books were given preliminary approval Thursday by the board, which is scheduled to make a final vote Friday.

Texas will spend \$345 million on

social studies and other books that will be used over the next six years. The texts adopted here are marketed in dozens of other states.

The books will now include passages about Mexicans who helped defend the Alamo and Hispanics who fought for civil rights.

"What better way than to let children know that they have worked together and fought together?" Berlanga said. "They'll see that they've been together on some of these issues and I just think it's

much more meaningful and makes history much more real and it's more factual."

The board voted 12-1 to accept the proposed books and allow publishers time to correct errors or make changes.

That upset member Dan Montgomery, R-Fredericksburg, who said he believed it was not right for the board to allow any content changes without giving the public a chance to review them.

He also believed members may

have broken state law, which prohibits the state board from making decisions about textbook content. The board can only reject books because of errors or failure to follow the state curriculum.

"This is nothing more than an attempt by this board to drive content against the Legislature's wishes," Montgomery said. His was the lone vote against the proposal.

Montgomery pointed to two large

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binders filled with hundreds of pages of changes, saying they represent changes based on various views, including Berlanga's.

He has nothing against including more minority history, but objects to the board "changing the rules" to do it, he said.

Berlanga said she believes the lack of ample Hispanic history is an error of omission.

Texas Education Agency attorney David Anderson said he believed the changes were legal because they were brought to the board for approval by publishers, not made by the board itself.

Publishers receive comments from hundreds of people in Texas, where there is always much debate over what goes into textbooks.

This year, dozens of citizens reviewed social studies books, including conservative groups that said some books were anti-American, anti-Christian and anti-conservative and successfully sought changes to reflect their beliefs.

Environmental groups have fought changes to references to global warming as a debateable topic and more liberal groups have accused publishers of giving in to radical social conservatives and the religious right.

Chris Patterson of the conservative Texas Public Policy Foundation said her group's

2,200-page review of the proposed history books helped the board adopt better texts.

"The open, public review process has ensured that not only do Texas school children receive better books, but so do children around the nation," Patterson said.

She said of the 533 factual errors identified in the 26 books analyzed by the foundation's 16 reviewers, close to 70 percent have been incorporated into the textbooks tentatively adopted Thursday.

The group found what it considered to be "frequent, incomplete treatments of key historical events, as well as inaccurate representations of economic theory and government philosophy."

On the other side, the Texas Freedom Network has been critical of changes such as eliminating references to "fossil fuels being formed millions of years ago" and instead saying "over time" so there would be no conflict with biblical timelines, which indicate the Earth has existed for a much shorter time.

Berlanga said she could live with those changes.

"If it means accepting them in order to accept the people who have been left out, who have fought for this country and died for this country, I'm willing to change 'over time,'" Berlanga said.