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Uvalde, TX
Uvalde Leader-News
Circ. 5870

JAN - 5 2003

A victory for Texas children

State Board of Education members voted 12-1 recently to adopt new social studies textbooks. The Texas Public Policy Foundation's 2,200-page review has led to numerous changes that will be incorporated in the textbooks.

"The publishers' main interest has obviously been to improve the quality of textbooks," said Chris Patterson, Director of Education Research for the Foundation. "The open, public review process has ensured that not only do Texas school children receive better books, but so do children around the nation. The books Texas adopts are the books that the rest of the nation will use."

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.

Additionally, the comments and suggestions of the reviewers will help shape future volumes of the books, while providing classroom teachers with necessary information regarding the content of the texts.

The Foundation's review was performed by classroom teachers and college professors, all reviewing books within their areas of specialization.

Patterson has recommended that the SBOE establish an advisory council that would review the review process and offer recommendations for further improvement.

"There can still be improvements in the adoption process.

For example, the definition of 'factual error' should be refined to include quality of content and expansiveness of coverage," she said.

Many of TPPF's reviewers commented on what they considered to be frequent, incomplete treatments of key historical events, as well as inaccurate representations of economic theory and government philosophy.

Foundation President and CEO Jeff Judson said the review represents the best kind of public involvement.

"We're proud to have participated in this review," he said. "The more voices we have contributing to the process, the better the textbooks will be."

Judson said the review cost the non-profit, non-partisan Foundation approximately \$100,000. "But by ensuring that students and teachers are getting academically sound, factually complete textbooks make the cost and effort more than worthwhile."

The Foundation's complete review can be found on its website at www.tppf.org.