



January 27, 2023

Dear Virginia Board of Education,

The Virginia Coalition for Human Rights (VCHR) and its 19 affiliates write to you with specific feedback for the January 2023 draft of the History and Social Science Standards of Learning (SOL).

Before our input on the January 2023 draft, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for the work of the Social Studies Department of the Department of Education. Their dedication to task and their resiliency to effect changes in three separate versions of this document is to be highly commended.

With regard to Arab Americans and their inclusion in Virginia's history, it is unclear where they are in this document. With regard to the modern Middle East and the origins of its dispute with Israel, it is unclear where it is in this document. **The absence of the word Palestine** is baffling to us.

There is no mention of Arab American civic movements, leaders and communities, migration to Virginia or impacts (social, cultural, economic) on our nation and state. This seems insufficient for statewide education standards given that the number of people in Virginia who identified as Arabic-speaking in the U.S. Census grew more than 42% between 2000 and 2017—more than doubling those who claimed an Arab ancestry since the Census first measured ethnic origins in 1980. It is among the fastest growing Arab populations in the country and is estimated between 100,000-150,000.

Inclusion of Arab American content in SOLs and in history textbooks supports the VDOE goal of diversity and inclusion. Knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the Arab American community can dispel stereotypes of Arabs in general and Arab Americans specifically. It may promote a positive self-image in students who, for the first time, see themselves and their community in educational materials. It could promote empathy in all students.

For additional clarifications and more information, please contact Jeanne Trabulsi at [vacoalition4hr@gmail.com](mailto:vacoalition4hr@gmail.com). We look forward to collaborating with you further during this process.

Respectfully yours,

Kathy Drinkard  
Jeanne Trabulsi  
Co-chairs, Education Committee  
Virginia Coalition for Human Rights

Paul Noursi – Co-chair  
Nancy Wein – Co-chair

#### Participating Organizations

Alliance of Baptists  
American Muslims for Palestine  
Appalachian Peace Education Center  
Arab American Association of Central Virginia  
Central Atlantic Conference (UCC)  
Palestine/Israel Network  
Defenders for Freedom, Justice, and Equality  
Episcopal Peace Fellowship—National Capital Regional Chapter  
Israel Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church—USA  
Jewish Voice for Peace  
National Arab American Women's Association  
New Dominion PAC  
Northern Virginians for Peace & Justice  
Palestinian Christian Alliance for Peace  
Plowshares Peace & Justice Center  
Richmonders for Peace in Israel–Palestine  
Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East—Northern Virginia Chapter  
United Methodists for Kairos Response  
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights  
Washington Interfaith Alliance for Middle East Peace

## Examples of Deficiencies in the January 2023 Draft of the History and Social Science SOLs

### General Feedback—No Correlating SOLs

#### Lack of Origin Explanation for Israel/Palestine.

Because SOLs drive textbooks, it is crucial that SOLs are scaffolded to provide the essential background knowledge and the content that allows students access to historical thinking. As it stands now, VCHR is of the opinion that any textbook derived from the January 2023 draft History SOL revision that concerns the modern Middle East would contain sins of omission and sins of commission.

These deficiencies, we contend, would make it virtually impossible for students to connect the dots—to understand fully why Israel/Palestine has been, for over 70 years, mired in warfare and unsettled in diplomacy. Omitting material that might offend is bad pedagogy and runs counter to the VDOE social science skills of utilizing causal explanations to attain historical understanding.

This sin of omission, in the SOLs, of the 2,000-year history of Palestine and the struggles of the Palestinian people has serious consequences. It cripples student understanding of colonialism not just in the Middle East but throughout Africa and Southeast Asia. Any higher-order thinking, such as drawing parallels between Native Americans and Palestinians would not be able to take place because the student is not provided with the necessary background information to make the connection.

#### Introduction to Standards Document

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In the introduction to the standards document, one reads, **“They will better understand the abhorrent treatment of Native Americans, the stain of slavery, segregation and racism in the United States and around the world, and the inhumanity and deprivations of communist regimes.”**

Slavery in this country was much more than a stain - a discoloration that is not easily removed. The word “inhumanity” is used to describe communist regimes. Let’s use “inhumanity” or its equivalent to describe slavery and its brutalization, lynchings, massacres, Jim crow segregation and modern iterations of these practices. The use of the word “stain” in this context is a breath-taking use of minimizing language!

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**“Every local school board has the responsibility and resources to select and fully implement standards that are aligned with the core history and social science curricula for every grade level and course. The curriculum selected by a local school board should provide a level of consistency and comprehension, so that “teacher-created curriculum” is unnecessary.”**

This language seems to give school districts permission to select the standards it wishes and to create the curriculum it wishes —at the expense of the teacher. This seems contrary to the aim of supporting teacher professionalism and contrary to the aim of ensuring that students are given exposure to a complete overview of Virginia’s complex and sometimes problematic history.

SOL#	SOL Standard	Comment:
<b>K — Kindergarten</b>		
K.1	The student will apply history and social science skills to practice citizenship in the classroom by...  b. following rules and understanding that not following the rules has consequences.	Rewrite this standard to indicate that students will participate in the rule-making process, and understand its purpose. Rules are created in any formal group in order to build and maintain community. They safeguard the needs and rights of all members of the group. This perspective broadens the substandard and helps students understand why following rules is important, to them and to their friends.
K.2	The student will apply social science skills to explain how communities honor state and national traditions and recognize officially designated Virginia holidays, including...	Include recognition of months designated to recognize specific groups in Virginia, including Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month (May) and Hispanic American Heritage Month (Sept 15-Oct 15), Arab American Heritage Month (April) and African American History Month (February)
K.4	The student will apply history and social science skills to recognize Virginia’s earliest communities by...  a. identifying examples of historical events, stories, legends of the early communities... b. identifying early communities and contributions of leaders and changemakers. c. recognizing that places change over time...	This standard is vague and seems to leave the door open to a wide variety of interpretations about what stories to use, which leaders to include, and what places to talk about. This standard needs more direction to develop a common understanding about the places, people and stories that are important in Virginia’s early history
K.8	The student will apply history and social science skills to demonstrate an understanding of primary economic principles by...  a. explaining that Americans are free to work to earn money to buy the things they need and want;	Edit for (a): Explaining that all Americans are free to work to earn money, but not all earn enough money to buy the things they need and want.
K.8	The student will apply history and social science skills to demonstrate an understanding of primary economic principles by...	Edit: at substandard c: students will begin to understand the difference between needs and wants.
<b>USI — US History I</b>		

SOL#	SOL Standard	Comment:
USI. 4	The student will apply history and social science skills to understand how the Western Hemisphere, including the United States, impacted West Africa by identifying the cultural connections, conflicts, and common values of their homeland, as well as challenges and hardships that enslaved people brought to the United States	Edit: Reword: <del>as challenges and hardships that enslaved people brought to the United States</del> The meaning and purpose of this part of the standard is unclear. It should be reworded.
USI. 8c	The student will apply history and social science skills to explain westward expansion and reform in America from 1801 to 1861 by identifying geographic, economic, and religious motivations that influenced the movement of settlers;	What impact did the discovery of gold in California in 1849 have on increasing westward migration of the population as well as immigrants arriving to the US?
USI. 8d	The student will apply history and social science skills to explain westward expansion and reform in America from 1801 to 1861 by analyzing the impact of westward expansion on Indigenous Peoples, including but not limited to the Indian Removal policies, the Trail of Tears, the Seminole Wars.	Explain the <b>significance of the US government's role</b> in the relocation of Indigenous people and the "Trail of Tears" and what the U.S. government gained from this act. Examine the <b>consequences for the Indigenous People</b> : what did they lose, how many perished, and what restitutions did they receive from the U.S.?
USI 8.		Add substandard g: <b>Examine how Chinese, Irish, and other immigrants were treated when they arrived in the US, and what factors contributed to the hostility directed at them?</b>
USI.9	The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the cause, major events, and effect of the Civil War by...	Add substandard (g) <b>Understanding the concept of "The Lost Cause of the Confederacy" and its effect on civil war interpretations.</b>
<b>USII — US History II</b>		
USII.1	The student will apply history and social science skills to examine westward expansion after the mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century by...	Edit for (d) <b>Examining the cost to the Indigenous Peoples of North America due to colonial settlers' western expansion and the ideology that prompted that expansion.</b>
USII.2b	The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the ongoing effects of Reconstruction on American life after the mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century by...	Edit for (b) describing the role and motivations of individuals who sought to gain from the reconstruction of the United States, <b>and those who sought to stop reconstruction</b> , including but not limited to the election of former slaves during the years right after the Civil War;
USII.3	The student will apply history and social science skills to understand how industrialization changed life in rural and urban American after the Civil War by...	Edit for (c) Explaining the events, factors, and motivations for individuals and groups to migrate to the United States towards the end of the 19 <sup>th</sup> century and <b>how and why their entry to the U.S differed by point of entry (California or New York).</b>

<b>SOL#</b>	<b>SOL Standard</b>	<b>Comment:</b>
USII.4	The student will apply history and social science skills to explain the changing role of the U.S. from the late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century through WW1 by...	Edit for (b) Explaining the reasons for and results of the Spanish-American War, including the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, and the effects on the lives of people in the Philippine Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico, and Cuba as pawns in this war
USII.5	The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the social, political, economic, and technological changes of the early twentieth century by...	Add substandard (h) Explaining how the rise of labor unions guaranteed the rights of workers to work in humane conditions.
USII.6e	The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the major causes, events, and effects of American's role in World War II by... explaining and evaluating the role of key political and military leaders of the allies and axis powers, including but not limited to, the United States, Germany, Japan, Soviet Union, Italy, Great Britain.	Add to this substandard (e) Examining sacrifices of the British, French, and Russian peoples, including the siege of Leningrad.
USII.7d	The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the transformation of the U.S. foreign policy between the end of WWII and leading into the new millennia by...	Edit for (d) Examining the role of the U.S. in defending freedom during the Cold War, including but not limited to the Berlin Airlift ...
USII.7e	The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the transformation of the U.S. foreign policy between the end of WWII and leading into the new millennia by...	Edit for (e) Describing how the events of 9/11 (September 11, 2001) and the heroic sacrifice of Flight 93 passengers changed domestic policies, how it affected Muslim Americans, and how it changed global perspectives on the War on Terror— including the many wars triggered by using the War on Terror as justification.
USII.7f	The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the transformation of the U.S. foreign policy between the end of WWII and leading into the new millennia by...	Add substandard (f) Examining the implementation of international trade agreements, such as NAFTA, and their impacts on workers foreign and domestic.
USII.8j	The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze the key changing patterns of society during the second half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century and early 21 <sup>st</sup> Century by...	Add substandard (j) Examining the movement for decarceration, a response to mass incarceration that aims to reduce the number of prisoners through the implementation of effective, sustainable, and socially just policies.
USII.8k	The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze the key changing patterns of society during the second half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century and early 21 <sup>st</sup> Century by...	Add substandard (k) Examining the impact on the composition of the U.S. armed forces by the abolishment of the draft.
USII.8l	The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze the key changing patterns of society during the second half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century and early 21 <sup>st</sup> Century by...	Add substandard (l) Examining the impact of the high cost of post-secondary education on students including student accumulation of debt.

SOL#	SOL Standard	Comment:
<b>CE — Civics Education</b>		
CE4	The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze American constitutional government at the local level by...	Add substandard (d) Understanding the process of redistricting and how it affects representation.
CE10	The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze the role of public participation in American civic life by...	Add substandard (d) Examining the obstacles that prevent civic participation, such as requirements for voter ID cards, removal of mail-in ballot boxes, and removal of polling places.
CE10	The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze the role of public participation in American civic life by...	Add substandard (e) Examining the effect on corporate influence in elections due to the Supreme Court decision in Citizens United.
<b>WHII — World History II</b>		
WHII.3b		Edit to Substandard (b) comparing and contrasting the social, political, economic and cultural effects of European colonization and the impact on and responses of indigenous peoples in Africa, Asia and the Americas
WHII.8	The student will apply history and social science skills to understand WWI by ...	Add substandard (h) Examining the role of the Ottoman Empire and the effect of its breakup in the region at war's end.
WHII.10b	The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the significance of the Cold War during the second half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century by...	Edit to (b) Describing the events, conflicts, and revolutionary movements, including, but not limited to, the Berlin Blockade, the Suez Canal Crisis, the Hungarian Revolution, Bay of Pigs, Cuban Missile Crisis, Cuban Revolution, Iran's Islamic Revolution, Prague spring, and the impact of clandestine operations on the Cold War.
WHII.10f	The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the significance of the Cold War during the second half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century by...	Edit to (f) Analyzing how nations around the world developed a culture of global interdependence and the use of aid as a tool for leverage.
WHII.11c	The student will apply history and social science skills to identify the political, economic, and socioeconomic aspects of independence movements and decolonization by...	Edit to (c) Describing the end of the League of Nations' mandate system and the outcome on countries in the Middle East, including Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq.
WHII.12a	The student will apply history and social science skills to explain global changes during the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century by...	Edit to (a) Identifying modern era genocides and crimes against humanity, including but not limited to Mao's Cultural Revolution, Stalin Regime, Palestine, Armenia, Cambodia, Fidel Castro's Cuba, Darfur, Rwanda, Rohingya and China's minority Uyghur population.

SOL#	SOL Standard	Comment:
WHII.12c	The student will apply history and social science skills to explain global changes during the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century by...	Edit to (c) Describing economic interdependence, including the rise of multinational corporations, international organizations, and trade agreements and their impact on workers worldwide who attempt to better working conditions.
<b>VUS — Virginia-US History</b>		
VUS.3a	The student will apply history and social science skills to explain the development of African American culture and the impact of the institute of slavery by...	Edit to (a) Describing the diverse cultures, languages, skills, religions (including Islam), and perspectives of Africans brought to the Americas.
VUS.4e	The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze the cooperation and conflict between the Indigenous Peoples and the new settlers by...	Edit to (e) Explaining the role of broken treaties and the factors that led to the defeat of the Indigenous Peoples, including but not limited to the resistance of Indian nations to the overwhelming force by the colonialists and the Trail of Tears.
VUS.8d	The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze the development and abolition of slavery in the U.S. by...	Edit to (d) Explaining the extension of rights provided in the 13 <sup>th</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup> , and 15 <sup>th</sup> amendments to the Constitution of the U.S. and identifying the ways in which those rights are being abridged in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century.
VUS.14	The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze America's involvement in WWII by...	Analyzing the Holocaust beginning with the history and role of antisemitism in the persecution of Jews...liberation, post-war trails, and post-war immigration to the U.S. and the creation of the modern State of Israel.
VUS.15e	The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War era by...	Edit to (e) Explaining how American foreign policy pressure and U.S. inflation of the military budget led to the end of the Cold War.
VUS.15f	The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War era by...	Add substandard (f) Examining the ways in which the U.S. seems headed for a new cold war with Russia and China.

SOL#	SOL Standard	Comment:
VUS.17b	<p>The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze political and social conditions in the U.S. during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and early 21<sup>st</sup> Century. . . by analyzing key events and conditions that have given rise to terrorism as an attack on democracy and the United States' role in defending democracy, including but not limited to 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, 2000 bombing of the USS Cole, and 9/11 attacks on the United States in 2001</p>	<p>Edit to (b) Analyzing key events and conditions that have given rise to terrorism, both foreign and domestic, as an attack on democracy and the U.S. role in defending democracy, including but not limited to the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, 2000 bombing of the USS Cole, the 911/attacks on the U.S. in 2001 and the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.</p> <p>It is misguided to assume that foreign terrorist attacks are attacks solely against democracy as a system of government; they are additionally attacks in reaction to abusive practices of American entities in some non-Western countries, particularly Arabic speaking countries.</p>
VUS.17c	<p>The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze political and social conditions in the U.S. during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century by . . . explaining social movements, including but not limited to the Vietnam War and the rise of the anti-war movement, Woodstock, the rise of the conservative movement and the election of Ronald Reagan, women's movement, gay rights movement, pro-life movement, and an increased domestic focus on HIV/AIDS, the rise of antisemitism and hate crimes, and domestic terrorism;</p>	<p>Edit to (c) Explaining social movements, including but not limited to the Vietnam War and the rise of the anti-war movement, Woodstock, the counter-culture Hippie Movement, the rise of the conservative movement and the election of Ronald Reagan, the women's movement, the gay rights movement, the pro-life movement, an increased domestic focus on HIV/AIDS, the Black Lives Matter movement, the Poor People's Campaign, the campaign to abolish mass incarceration, the rise of white supremacy and Christian Nationalism with an increase in antisemitism and hate crimes against minorities. the rise of antisemitism and hate crimes, and domestic terrorism. How does a focus on HIV/AIDS constitute a social movement, any more than responding to the Covid-19 epidemic is a social movement?</p>
<b>GOVT — Virginia and United States Government (Grade 12)</b>		
GOVT.1a	<p>The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the foundations of American constitutional government by</p> <p>d. describing the features of a democratic republic as influenced by forms of Athenian democracy and the Roman Republic</p>	<p>Students should understand that Athenian and Roman democracy involved decision making only by the landholding elite. Most of the people living in those societies had no say in the decisions that impacted their lives. A government that allows participation of the poor and common people is a modern-day invention. While these ancient and modern forms of group decision-making are superficially similar, that is all that they have in common. This helps explain why voting in the early days of our republic was restricted to men who held property.</p>



SOL#	SOL Standard	Comment:
GOVT.2b	The student will apply history and social science skills to describe the concept of democracy by e. comparing structures of government including constitutional republic, autocracy, direct democracy, representative democracy, presidential system, and parliamentary system;	Edit to (b) Add socialism and communism, two forms of government found widely in the world today.
GOVT.2f	The student will apply history and social science skills to describe the concept of democracy by f. recognizing the freedom of the individual	Care must be taken to make it clear that freedom doesn't mean doing anything a person wants to do; rights and needs of others must always be a part of the calculation.
GOVT.6a	The student will apply history and social studies skills to explain the process of local, state and national elections by a. describing how amendments have extended the right to vote to previously disenfranchised Americans	Identify recent state laws enacted around the country that make it harder to vote with stricter identification rules, limitations on what election officials can do to help promote voter participation and access, limiting early-voting periods. Evaluate how this aligns with or contradicts the right to vote as enshrined in the U.S. Constitution.
GOVT.6b	The student will apply history and social studies skills to explain the process of local, state and national elections by b. examining campaign finance laws and campaign funding and spending, including the impact of Supreme Court decisions, the nationalization of campaign financing, and the role of interest groups	Edit: Add Substandard: Evaluate the impact of the 2010 U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (FEC) on elections since that date to the present. What are the arguments in favor of the ruling and in opposition to the ruling? Why does it remain highly controversial?
GOVT.9d	The student will apply history and social science skills to describe the scope and limits of the powers of the federal judiciary as delineated in Article III of the U.S. Constitution by d. comparing the philosophy of originalism, judicial activism, and judicial restraint	Edit: d. understanding originalism and other theories of constitutional interpretation.  Insert 9. e: Understanding the concepts of judicial activism and judicial restraint.
GOVT.10	The student will apply history and social science skills to explain the organization and powers of the state and local governments as described in the Constitution of Virginia by . . .	Edit: Insert substandard that directs students to learn about the powers retained by the states or not prohibited to the states by the Federal government.
GOVT.10	The student will apply history and social science skills to explain the organization and powers of the state and local governments as described in the Constitution of Virginia by	Edit: Insert Substandard g: Analyze the impact of local government decisions on the lives of citizens. Identify an area of interest such as public health during a pandemic or the environment during the building of solar facilities and evaluate how local government decisions impact the lives of citizens.

SOL#	SOL Standard	Comment:
GOVT.11c	<p>The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze civil liberties and civil rights by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Analyzing the rights of the accused and due process of law expressed in the Bill of Rights and the Fourteenth Amendment</li> </ul>	<p>Edit: Include in this standard a provision for learning what restitutions are available to people who are wrongfully convicted of a crime.</p>
GOVT.13b	<p>The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the role of the United States in a changing world by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. comparing the characteristics of economies as described by Adam Smith, Karl Marx, John Maynard Keynes, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, and Thomas Sowell;</li> </ul>	<p>Who are some current economists who are examining the impact of the free-market economy and working to decrease the wealth gap between the rich and the poor of the world?</p>
GOVT.13g	<p>The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the role of the United States in a changing world by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>g. explaining how competition and free enterprise influence the local, national, and global economies.</li> </ul>	<p>Examine the relationships between low prices and large retailers like Walmart for consumer goods such as clothing and cheap labor used to produce clothing and other consumer goods in less prosperous countries. Who benefits the most and who gains the least, and why?</p>
GOVT.14a	<p>The student will apply history and social science skills to explain the role of government in the Virginia and United States economies by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. explaining government's limited but important role in free enterprise and how that affects individual economic freedoms;</li> </ul>	<p>Edit: this statement projects a particular viewpoint of the role of government in economics. A better standard would be: explaining the different points of view about the role of government in economic policy and the impact those views could have on individual economic choice.</p>