



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

Participating Organizations

American Muslims for Palestine
Appalachian Peace Education Center
Arab American Association of Central Virginia
Defenders for Freedom, Justice, and Equality
Israel-Palestine Mission Network of the National Capital Presbytery
Jewish Voice for Peace
Justice in Palestine & Israel
Community of the Alliance of Baptists
New Dominion PAC
Northern Virginians for Peace & Justice
Palestinian Christian Alliance for Peace
Plowshare Peace & Justice Center
Richmonders for Peace in Israel and 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

June 4, 2018

Governor Ralph Northam
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Subject: Questionable Edits to Virginia K-12 Textbooks

Dear Governor Northam,

On the behalf of the Virginia Coalition for Human Rights (VCHR), a coalition of 16 organizations representing over 8,000 Virginians, we write to request that you freeze the suggested changes to Virginia social studies textbooks made by the Institute of Curriculum Studies (ICS) and **not incorporate them until a panel of qualified and nonpartisan academic experts is consulted.**

If adopted, many of the changes proposed by ICS (at the behest of Israel advocacy organizations) would degrade, rather than improve, the accuracy of Virginia's textbooks and teaching guides. We have profiled the most troubling changes, outlined inaccuracies and disinformation, and have asked the seven textbook publishers to adhere to strict quality standards in all textbook editing. Because VCHR wants to ensure that Virginia students have access to accurate historical information on the Middle East, we present a fact sheet that makes a strong case against any rushed adoption of the factually-challenged, biased, and exclusionary ICS recommendations. (Please see enclosures.)

We congratulate Virginia students on outperforming their nationwide peers on the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress tests. We concur with your remarks that you want to "ensure that every student in the Commonwealth is prepared with the educational foundation to enter the workforce and to be part of the 21st-century economy."

In that vein, we thank you for ensuring that these students—these future leaders of the state and of the nation—will be provided with fact-based, nonpartisan textbooks. As such, we will monitor the outcome of our effort, and we will keep you apprised.

Based on the above, we respectfully request your support in maintaining the accuracy of our K-12 textbooks. More specifically, we respectfully request that a panel of qualified and nonpartisan academic experts be consulted to make recommendations to improve the accuracy and intellectual veracity of the subject textbooks

regarding their coverage of the Middle East. We would be very happy to assist in identifying qualified recognized academic experts for such a panel.

Also, please let us know how your administration will respond to the serious concerns listed above, and please identify a point of contact within your administration with whom we can coordinate directly regarding these concerns. The VCHR point of contact for this issue is Jeanne Trabulsi at jgracet@msn.com.

With the beginning of the school year 2018-2019 only about three months away, we respectfully request your response to this letter by June 30, 2018. We thank you in advance for your commitment to providing accurate textbooks to Commonwealth of Virginia students and teachers.

Sincerely yours,
Virginia Coalition for Human Rights



Paul Noursi
Co-chair



Nancy Wein
Co-chair

Copies To:

1. Atif Qarni, Secretary of Education
2. Frances C. Branford, Deputy Secretary of Education
3. Holly Coy, Deputy Secretary of Education
4. Dr. James Lane, Superintendent of Public Instruction
5. Dr. Steven Constantino, Chief Academic Officer of Instruction
6. Christonya Brown, Virginia Department of Education
7. Virginia General Assembly - Senate Education and Health Committee
8. Virginia General Assembly - House of Delegates Education Committee
9. The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox, Speaker of the House
10. The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Senate Majority Leader
11. The Honorable Richard L. Saslaw, Senate Minority Leader
12. The Honorable David J. Toscano, House Minority Leader

Enclosures:

1. Letter to publishers
2. Fact Sheet
3. Press Release