



Calif. Offers Textbook Case of Political Correctness

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LOS ANGELES — A textbook review process in California has changed or eliminated references to everything from the **Founding Fathers** ([search](#)) to hot dogs, leaving many to charge the state with distorting history in the name of political correctness.

The textbook review process, which is routinely done in many states, is meant to eliminate or replace outdated words or phrases. But what's happening in California has a lot of people wondering — quite literally — "Where's the beef?"

That's because many California textbooks will no longer feature pictures of hot dogs, sodas, cakes, butter and other kinds of food that are not considered nutritious. Nor will the books contain any phrases judged to be sexist or politically insensitive.

The Founding Fathers, for instance, are now referred to as "The Framers," in an apparent effort to make them sound less male-dominant. And there will be no more reading about **Mount Rushmore** ([search](#)), where the faces of four U.S. presidents are carved into stone, because it appears to offend some American-Indian groups.

The changes, which reflect a wide range of **political correctness** ([search](#)), have been brought about by pressure groups on both sides of the political aisle, as both Democratic and Republican legislators have been lobbied.

Snowman? No more. Melt that image and replace with Snowperson. Want to sail away on a yacht? No, again. It's too elitist.

And if you think grandpa is a senior citizen, guess what? You're wrong. That's demeaning, according to the new standards. He is now simply an "older person."

The laundry list of words and images banned or considered offensive is not a short one. The word "jungle" has been replaced with "rain forest." The word "devil" has disappeared entirely, with no

replacement.

Many of the changes seem to represent a direct assault on historical accuracy. For example, the new guidelines dictate American Indians should not be depicted with long braids, in rural settings or on reservations. There are no suggestions on how they should be depicted, however.

The problem there, say historians, is that some American Indians did wear their hair in braids, and generally lived in rural settings before being relocated to reservations.

Some say the changes are needed to better reach out to today's diverse student population. Others have a different name for it.

"It's outright censorship," said author Diane Ravitch, who has written extensively on the subject of how the nation's schools have dealt with the issue. "It dumbs down our textbooks, makes them bland, far less interesting than anything children might see in the movies -- even in G-rated movies or TV.

"The problems that have happened in education is that the textbook publishers and the test developers have become so sensitive to any controversy that whenever they receive a complaint it is very likely that they will remove the source of the complaint," explained Ravitch.

Textbook publishers admit they are in a bind. They say if they don't adopt the changes made by large states like California and Texas, they would suffer severe economic consequences.

Still, there are those who defend the changes made.

"I think our textbooks should to our greatest capacity be free of any type of stereotyping," said Sue Stickel, deputy superintendent for curriculum and instruction for the **California Department of Education** ([search](#)). "We need to make sure that all ethnicities are represented. We need to make sure that both males and females are represented. We need to make sure that our materials cover the full gamut."

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