



STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

KRISTI NOEM | GOVERNOR

May 24, 2021

John W. Bastian  
President  
South Dakota Board of Regents  
306 E Capitol Avenue #200  
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear President Bastian,

As Governor, I have become increasingly concerned about a growing movement throughout the country to reject patriotic education and downplay the positive revolution in human affairs set in motion by our Founders. Our children and grandchildren should understand the full picture of our nation's history—our fundamental values, our greatest achievements, and the long struggles to overcome injustice as well. Our next generation must also learn about our triumphs as well as our mistakes, with those mistakes being examined in context. I fear South Dakota will soon face many of the same forces that have wrecked other states' education systems and left millions of our young people ill-prepared for the blessings and burdens of American citizenship.

My goal, which I hope you and your board colleagues share, is that all educational institutions throughout South Dakota, including our state universities, will resist the national trend teaching students that—by virtue of their sex, race, ethnicity, religion, color, or national origin—they are inherently responsible for actions committed in the past by other members of those same classes. The Biden Administration is already using the 1619 Project of the New York Times as a recommended resource for its grant recipients under the K-12 American History and Civics Education programs. According to many respected historians, that program is infused with errors and misstatements about our nation's history, errors that South Dakota should strive to avoid, rather than embrace as the Biden Administration would have us do. Last week, South Dakota Secretary of Education Tiffany Sanderson, along with State Historian Dr. Ben Jones, provided comments to the federal government opposing these efforts, and my Administration will continue to act when we have the opportunity to do so.

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As leaders, we must recognize troubling issues and act before they become urgent problems affecting our children and grandchildren. In that light, I would ask you and your board colleagues to consider the following:

- Whether appropriated funds are being used in a manner that neither the legislative nor the executive branch would support. This could include the advancement or promotion of "action civics," the 1619 Project, Critical Race Theory, or any similar theory that misleads students into believing the country is evil or was founded upon evil, or requiring, compelling, or otherwise directing students to personally affirm, adopt, or adhere to any such beliefs or tenets;
- Whether our state's post-secondary public institutions under your purview are ensuring the classroom remains a place for learning, study, and exploration, and not a platform for instruction that serves to advance individual, ideological, or political agendas. It is critical that our classrooms remain a place of learning, not indoctrination; and
- Whether the diversity offices in those same institutions are still working within the scope of their original mission, or whether they have experienced inappropriate "mission creep."

As you consider these issues, I would also ask you whether the time is now—before national trends threaten to overtake our state—for the Board of Regents to set policy that is appropriate and tailored for South Dakota and her citizens. I trust you will agree with me that we need to preserve honest, patriotic education throughout South Dakota—education that that cultivates in our next generation both a profound love of our country and a realistic picture of its virtues and challenges. I look forward to working together with the Board of Regents on this goal.

Sincerely,



Kristi Noem  
Governor