

Mark Loewe's responses to Texas Freedom Network questions, 2012

1. Teachers and academic scholars should have primary responsibility for writing curriculum standards and textbook requirements for Texas public schools.

Disagree

2. Elections for the State Board of Education should be nonpartisan.

No position

3. The State Board of Education should set minimum qualifications for experts involved with the adoption of curriculum standards and textbooks, including teaching experience or academic research in a relevant field of study.

Disagree

4. State Board of Education members should be required to file proposed amendments to curriculum standards in advance of meetings so that all board members have an opportunity to study the proposals fully before voting on those amendments.

Disagree

5. Optional comments about SBOE authority and process (500 word limit)

The SBOE has substantial responsibility for writing and adoption of statewide curriculum standards and for approval of state payment for most textbooks adopted by school districts.

Voters should elect the best people from those who stand for election to our SBOE and should not exclude from consideration people who are not teachers or academic scholars. Such exclusion is unnecessary and would exclude people who possess great knowledge, experience, and wisdom, possibly as great as Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas Edison.

Voters in District 5 may wish to compare my good to excellent knowledge of many areas of physics, chemistry, mathematics, and engineering to the inferior knowledge of others who have served, or who wish to serve, on our SBOE. I am a doctor of physics and a chemist, coauthored a graduate level textbook on quantum mechanics, taught physics at the University of Texas and Texas State University (chose UT over MIT, UC Berkeley, and other universities), received Fulbright-Kommission support to do physics research in West Germany, gave invited talks on physics in the Soviet Union, discovered that incorrect scores on TAKS mathematics and science tests were issued to hundreds of thousands of Texas students, helped to develop a tiny (25 gram) magnetically-driven on-wheel air compressor to maintain proper car tire pressure (expected to save hundreds of lives, millions of tires, and billions of gallons of fuel per year in the United States), do microelectronics research and development, and do theoretical physics research. I also wrote House Bill 2959 (81st Legislature) for Texas to acquire low cost mathematics and science textbooks for children to keep permanently, devised progressive school vouchers to attract billions of additional private dollars per year into Texas K-12 education and to maximize public education funds for any child, discovered errors of roughly \$752 million in values of two international funds held by our Permanent School Fund, and proposed improvements to Texas high school mathematics and economics curricula. See <http://www.markloewe.org/>.

I will vote against any amendment to curriculum standards that requires further study to gain my approval at the time of the vote. I would advise SBOE members to propose amendments in time to gain my approval prior to votes. A requirement to propose amendments in advance of meetings is unnecessary and would prevent consideration of amendments, including corrective amendments, proposed during meetings.

1. Science classes should NOT present creationism and/or “intelligent design” alongside evolution as credible scientific theories.

Agree

2. Public school science classes should present the substantial scientific agreement about the occurrence, consequences and causes of climate change, including anthropogenic/human-causal factors.

3. Social studies instructional materials (textbooks) should make clear that the separation of church and state is a key Constitutional principle that protects religious freedom in America by barring government from promoting or disfavoring a particular religion.

Agree

4. Texas’ new social studies curriculum standards (TEKS) distort or suppress aspects of U.S. history dealing with slavery, segregation and struggles for civil rights by women and minorities, and the State Board of Education should REJECT social studies instructional materials (textbooks) that do not correct these flawed elements.

5. High school sex education classes should teach the importance of abstinence but also include medically accurate information about contraception and disease prevention, including condoms and other forms of birth control.

Agree

6. Texas should NOT use taxpayer dollars to fund vouchers that pay tuition for students at private religious schools.

7. Texas should require public schools to protect all children from bullying, harassment and discrimination in school, including the children of gay and lesbian parents or teenagers who are gay.

Agree

8. Optional comments related to educational issues (500 word limit)

Teachers should consider that 31,478 American scientists, including 9,029 with Ph. D.s and including Frederick Seitz, Edward Teller, and S. Fred Singer, signed a petition that reads: “We urge the United States government to reject the global warming agreement that was written in Kyoto, Japan in December, 1997, and any other similar proposals. The proposed limits on greenhouse gases would harm the environment, hinder the advance of science and technology, and damage the health and welfare of mankind. There is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gases is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth’s atmosphere and disruption of the Earth’s climate. Moreover, there is substantial scientific evidence that increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide produce many beneficial effects upon the natural plant and animal environments of the Earth.”

Social studies material should emphasize our Constitution’s provisions that “The Congress shall have Power ... to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts” and that “no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.”

Question 4 lacks specificity.

I devised progressive vouchers to attract billions of additional private dollars per year into Texas K-12 education and to maximize public education funds for any child. Progressive vouchers would provide voucher schools with public funds equal to 75 percent of the public funds that government schools receive per weighted child except that a voucher school's public funds would be reduced by 25 percent of any private funds the voucher school is fortunate enough to receive. See <http://www.markloewe.org/>.

Voucher schools, like government schools, would receive more public education funds to serve children who have higher funding weights, as an incentive to accommodate or to specialize in serving blind and other special needs children who may be poorly served by government schools or institutions.

Progressive vouchers would empower millions of parents to reject mediocre schools and choose safe schools that better serve the individual needs, abilities, and interests of their children. When choosing schools, parents may compare results of government required academic achievement tests given at all schools that receive public education funds.

Any school that discriminates against a child based on the child's religion or race or that does not administer district wide (or statewide) achievement tests whose results are made public would be INELIGIBLE to receive public education funds.

Classroom teachers would enjoy higher salaries and better working conditions. Salaries would rise due to the billions of dollars of additional private funding and due to shifts in spending away from top-heavy administration and wasteful programs. Working conditions would improve because teachers could more easily choose to work at, or start up, schools that more productively employ their talents, promote learning, and, when necessary, remediate disruptive behavior.

The Texas Legislature should pass a bill to implement progressive vouchers statewide or to enable voters to implement progressive vouchers within their school districts.