

My name is Zachary Schrag. I am both a Virginia public school parent and a professor of history at George Mason University, though tonight I speak for myself and not for my institution.

I appreciate the goals of the draft standards, especially their emphasis on “**curiosity and excitement**” and the “**skills of historical analysis.**” Students should understand history not as a list of facts to be memorized, but rather as **the study of people and the choices they made.** And it should be fun.

Unfortunately, several elements of the January 2023 standards work against those goals. As you have heard tonight, the **length and detail** of the standards will crowd out opportunities for teachers to spark curiosity and excitement with discussions, local history, field trips, and open-ended assignments.

Moreover, the content of the January 2023 standards suggest that they were designed for ideological—rather than scholarly—ends. Three examples.

The first is the denigration of **socialism** as “incompatible with democracy and individual freedoms.” The standards mention such champions of freedom as Vaclav Havel and Helen Keller without noting that they were socialists. They mention food safety, but you don’t get that without Upton Sinclair, a socialist. They mention the 1963 March on Washington, but not its chair, A. Philip Randolph, socialist. Rather than being told *what* to think about socialism, students should be given full information and tools of historical analysis to reach their own conclusions.

The second is the odd treatment of the **New Deal**, which lacks detail but asks students to identify “**opportunities for some and losses for others**”.

Opportunities and losses are common to **all** historical movements, from the American Revolution to the spread of the internet. I would like to see the New Deal treated as an episode like the others.

Finally, I note the erasure of **labor and labor activism.** Students *should* learn about the philanthropy of Carnegie, Mellon, and Rockefeller, but also about the workers who toiled to build up the wealth that those men gave away. And they should learn of the union leaders and members who pushed for better conditions, shorter hours, higher pay, and greater equality.

These standards are deeply flawed, *and they want prepare students for universities like mine.* ~~but you have an easy fix. Unlike the current draft,~~ **the August 2022 standards reflect the process and values of my profession. Please adopt those.**