

## **October 2021 Legislative Report**

Hello everyone, and welcome to another year of the Elyria Education Association's Legislative Report. If the regular afternoon email from Amy Higgins isn't enough to get your blood up, let Ohio's political leaders elevate your level of anxiety to an unhealthier level.

As always, if you've got questions, input, or don't like "the cut of my jib," as they say, just let me know. I'm open to a hostile takeover of the Legislative Committee.

In the meantime...

**Backpack Bill:** In early October, a few Ohio legislators, along with the Center for Christian Virtue [dropped a bill](#) that would expand the availability of funding for vouchers. The so-called Backpack Bill would [provide each of Ohio's students \\$6000](#) in state dollars to attend a private, parochial, or be homeschooled. Needless to say, this could be catastrophic for public schools' ability to maintain services. The bill is currently in committee with no hearing scheduled.

**Divisive Concepts:** Two bills (HB322 & HB327) are making the rounds in the Ohio House of Representatives that would ban the teaching of "divisive concepts." Largely designed to prevent discussions regarding race, one sponsor indicated the purpose is to prevent "creating feelings of discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress in individuals on account of his or her race, color, nationality, or sex." The fervor is based on the narrative that Critical Race Theory is being taught in K-12 classrooms.

OEA views the bills as a threat to academic freedom & honesty in education. Here's a link to [their Action Alert](#), and some things that you can do.

Here's an [Ohio Capital Journal article](#) on the bills.

Here's [one from the Columbus Dispatch](#).

This is a link to a [statement of opposition](#) from the Ohio Council for the Social Studies.

Here's some info & opposition from the [League of Women Voters](#).

For a look at Critical Race Theory, and whether or not it's being taught in K12 schools (spoiler, it's not), here's an [article from the Cincinnati Enquirer](#) featuring some professors who are well-versed in the subject.

**Ohio, thy name is Gerrymander.** In November 2015, Ohio voters overwhelmingly passed Issue 1, which created redistricting reform for Ohio House and Ohio Senate districts. In May 2018, 75% of voters approved congressional redistricting reform. Ohio was on a path to no longer being one of the worst gerrymandered states in the country. Then, the Republican

dominated redistricting committee approved new maps even more gerrymandered in the Republicans favor than they had been before.

In short, this assures an even greater Republican supermajority in the General Assembly, and terribly limits the options for voters while dramatically diminishing the value of the votes of those in the minority party.

For more info overall, including what gerrymandering is and why it's problematic, check out the nonpartisan [Fair Districts Ohio](#).

There is also some information regarding OEA's outrage on the situation in their [Legislative Watch from September 24th](#).

The [ACLU and other groups have sued the state of Ohio](#) over the redistricting debacle, leaving the fate of the biased maps in the hands of the Ohio Supreme Court, another entity dominated by Republicans, including Governor DeWine's son, Pat, who [refuses to recuse himself from the trial](#) despite this clear conflict of interest.

**Senate Bill 1** looks set to become law having passed the House in late September. It [creates a Financial Literacy Graduation Requirement](#). The bill also includes an amendment to provide flexibility in who can be hired as a substitute. This provision is due to substitute teacher shortages due to Covid-19, and allows for substitutes to be hired who do not have a four year degree. It also allows certain robots and plants with human characteristics to serve as substitute teachers. Obviously, that last part is not true. In my defense, I never guessed anyone would still be reading.