



November 17, 2022

APSA Statement on “Divisive Concepts” Legislation

In June 2021, the American Political Science Association joined 155 organizations and associations in a [joint statement](#) against state legislative proposals that sought to restrict teaching and discussions about racism in classrooms and on campus. Divisive concepts laws and proposed legislation can chill the speech of all scholars teaching in these states and place an outsized burden on contingent and junior faculty who lack tenure protections. These laws are a direct threat to academic freedom. As leaders of the American Political Science Association, we write today to reaffirm our strong opposition to these bills and to share our support for all scholars who may be subjected to them.

Research from [PEN America](#) found that 39 percent of these “educational gag orders” introduced in 2022 targeted higher education. The laws, which often restrict discussion or training related to race, gender, and sexuality, are typically vague and broad. Their imprecision and breadth create additional uncertainty and fear for scholars and educators. APSA is [committed](#) to open enquiry and scholarly pluralism. Our discipline benefits from diverse methodological and theoretical approaches to research and education. Promoting high quality teaching and education about politics and government is also a core objective of the association, and the free flow of information and ideas is critical to this objective. Education about history and government lays a foundation for students to become informed and engaged citizens. Interference in their education does students a disservice and undermines the democratic value of an informed public. The legislation restricting teaching certain concepts, ideas, or facts is in direct opposition to APSA’s mission and values.

As the organizers of the joint statement wrote, “legislation cannot erase ‘concepts’ or history; it can, however, diminish educators’ ability to help students address facts in an honest and open environment capable of nourishing intellectual exploration.” Political scientists are skilled at helping students engage critically and productively with the world around them. We play an important role in teaching students about our political systems at all levels and encouraging students to be engaged with both our history and our civic institutions. Government interference in such scholarly endeavors is unacceptable and threatens freedom of speech, academic freedom, and the free exchange of ideas—rights historically protected under the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

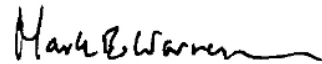


Lisa Martin

Lisa Martin
President



John Ishiyama
Past President



Mark E. Warren

Mark E. Warren
President-Elect



Steven Rathgeb Smith
Executive Director

###

Founded in 1903, the American Political Science Association is the leading professional organization for the study of political science and serves more than 13,000 members in more than 80 countries. With a range of programs and services for individuals, departments, and institutions, APSA brings together political scientists from all fields of inquiry, regions, and occupational endeavors within and outside academe to deepen our understanding of politics, democracy, and citizenship throughout the world.