

Council Resolution on State of Arizona Anti-Ethnic Studies Law

January 25, 2012

In April 2010, the Arizona State Legislature approved Senate Bill 1070, ("Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act"), an anti-immigrant measure that a federal judge later ruled encourages racial profiling and violates federal law (the ruling remains under appeal and is likely headed for the U.S. Supreme Court), and the legislature approved House Bill 2281, a ban on ethnic studies (read, Mexican American studies) in public schools, on the grounds that such classes "promote resentment toward a race or class of people" and "promote the overthrow of the United States government." Recently, the state ruled that the Tucson public school ethnic studies programs are illegal under the 2010 law. ASA continues to oppose this legislation, please see the statement below.

American Sociological Association
Council Resolution on State of Arizona Anti-Ethnic Studies Law
HB 2281

Whereas the membership of the American Sociological Association (ASA) represents nearly 15,000 scientific, academic, government, and professional sociologists throughout the United States, including many in the State of Arizona;

Whereas the ASA has a tradition of vigorous support for the principles of academic freedom that help to ensure that those with specific knowledge and expertise can guide curriculum development at all levels of education;

Whereas ethnic studies K-12 curricula draw upon research and scholarship from established fields of the social sciences and humanities such as sociology, history, economics, literature and philosophy, as well as from the knowledge developed in interdisciplinary ethnic studies departments in the nation's foremost universities and colleges;

Whereas the aim of teaching and learning in ethnic studies is to expose students to the rich array of experiences and the complex interrelations among individuals and groups that has a long history of scholarship that includes the development of individual, ethnic and national identities so that students have a deeper, more accurate, and more comprehensive understanding of American society and its history and culture;

Whereas ethnic studies is an enriching aspect of the American educational experience of most public and private school students throughout the United States and is an area of scholarship and doctoral preparation at our leading universities;

Whereas HB 2281 makes possible, and potentially encourages, the persecution of teachers and school administrators in Arizona solely on the basis of presenting material in their classrooms that comes from a recognized body of scholarship that has produced an extensive and useful body of knowledge;

Whereas our Association's members, as well as those of other scholarly societies, have a growing concern that similar legislation could outlaw or significantly limit the teaching of ethnic studies courses and programs at Arizona's outstanding public colleges and universities;

Whereas it will be a great disservice to the youth of Arizona to be deprived of access to this rich body of important knowledge that has contributed to the well-being of the United States, a nation that is envied across the democratic world for its successful diversity;

Therefore be it resolved that the Council of the American Sociological Association issues this public condemnation of the legislature of Arizona and Governor Jan Brewer for enacting HB 2281 and calls for its repeal.

Be it further resolved that the Council of the American Sociological Association calls on the people of Arizona to recognize that the United States is, and has always been, a country composed of people from many different backgrounds whose diverse experiences and cultures have contributed to the nation's dynamism and progress.