

D
E
R
E
A
S
O
N
S
P

It's not just that Texas has national market leverage against oligopolistic publishers. It's about the original intent of the Texas Constitution, popular sovereignty, and State Board of Education checks-and-balances on legislators.

REASONS WHY TEXAS DRIVES
public school textbook reform

NON-TAX FINANCED PURCHASES	California's tax woes have formally halted state textbook approvals until 2016. Its Superintendent of Public Instruction has said, "It could be close to a generation before we see new textbooks." But Texas spends no tax revenue on textbooks. Instead, income from Texas' Permanent School Fund buys its textbooks. Unlike California, Texas need never suspend textbook adoptions due to tax shortfalls.
Unlike other administrative entities, Texas' State Board of Education (SBOE) is semi-independent because Texas' Constitution entrusts it with management of the Permanent School Fund, and because – unlike in most states – it is elected, not appointed, with its own democratic mandate. Legislative bids to end SBOE power over textbook approvals always fail due to strong popular resistance.	QUASI-AUTONOMOUS OVERSIGHT
EFFECTIVE POPULAR LEVERAGE	Texas' elected SBOE thus has unique political standing to keep the annual state textbook adoption cycle going by providing Permanent School Fund money for it each year, pressing appropriators to allocate it for textbooks instead of spending it elsewhere as general revenue. Over time, voters bring to heel politicians who balk at so doing. In publishers' eyes this makes Texas a more reliable market.
Texas' schedule for upgrading course standards aligns with its textbook adoption cycle. The SBOE protects its prerogative on the former by determining the latter. Hence legislative budgetary constraints need not trump curriculum improvements by the SBOE. This speeds updating instruction in subjects like Science, where knowledge changes quickly, and urgent reform such as in English Language Arts.	NO ECONOMIC PRESSURE ON STANDARDS
SEPARATE SBOE & LEGISLATIVE SCHEDULES	"Nothing is safe," goes an old Texas proverb, "when the legislature is in session." Texas' Constitution therefore limits regular legislative sessions to just 140 days every other year, from January to May. The SBOE usually addresses textbooks from July to November each year. Its textbook approvals seldom coincide with legislative sessions and so are largely free from legislative micro-management.
The public has freer and faster access to textbooks up for Texas approval each year, including Teacher's Editions, than in other states. This empowers people to review them more thoroughly and testify on them more knowledgeably. That makes publishers more careful about what they say and how they say it before submitting them, and better informs the SBOE on whether to approve them.	OPEN APPROVAL PROCESS
INTENSE GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM	In some textbook adoptions, Texas' dynamic populist tradition of feisty citizen involvement routs the power of wealth to corrupt, of lobbyists to confuse, and of the miseducation establishment to control; and births spontaneous, ad hoc, enlightened leadership initiatives that pull up creative chairs and deal themselves influential hands (as on the inside pages here on Islam, evolution, and phonics).