

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Education Pre-K -12

BILL: SB 1264

INTRODUCER: Senator Collins

SUBJECT: History of Communism Task Force

DATE: February 5, 2024

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Sabitsch	Bouck	ED	Pre-meeting
2.			AED	
3.			FP	

I. Summary:

SB 1264 requires instruction on the history of communism and creates a History of Communism Task Force. Additionally, the bill:

- Requires each school district to annually certify to the Department of Education that it has provided the required instruction on the history of communism.
- Establishes the History of Communism Task Force and provides requirements of the task force to develop recommendations regarding curriculum and standards for instruction on the history of communism.
- Requires the State Board of Education to develop a curriculum on the history of communism.
- Allows the task force to recommend to the legislature the creation of a museum of communist history.

The bill is effective July 1, 2024.

II. Present Situation:

Communism

Communism is a political and economic philosophy that aims to replace private property and a profit-based economy with public ownership and communal control of the major means of production and society's natural resources. Karl Marx and his associate, Friedrich Engels, blamed capitalism for the unfavorable and often-hazardous conditions of workers during the Industrial Revolution. They presented this critique of capitalism in 1848 in their widely circulated pamphlet, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.¹

¹ Encyclopedia Britannica, *Communism*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/communism> (last visited Feb. 1, 2024).

One facet of the communist theory is that the proletariat (one of the lowest classes of society which lives entirely by the sale of its labor) would capture political power, abolish private property ownership, and take the private property of the bourgeoisie. Communism postulates that the taking and abolishment of private property by the proletariat would result in shared ownership of the means of production, ushering the world into a communal economic and societal utopia with equality for all.²

Before the full establishment of communism, however, the communist theory suggests that a transitional dictatorship of the proletariat may be necessary.³

Bolshevik Revolution

The Bolshevik Revolution, also known as the October Revolution, was the second of two revolutions in Russia in 1917. The Bolshevik Revolution was a revolution led by Vladimir Lenin in Russia against the ruling Russian Parliament that had replaced the ruling Tsar in the same year. The coup began in November of 1917, when the Bolsheviks led forces into Petrograd, then the capital of Russia. The Bolsheviks occupied government buildings and other locations across Petrograd. The coup led to the Russian Civil War and eventually the creation of the Soviet Union. The event inspired and ignited communist movements around the world.⁴ However, instead of the expected dictatorship of the majority class of proletarians, the revolution resulted in a political party that claimed to represent proletarian interests.⁵

Required Instruction

The mission of Florida's K-20 education system is to allow its students to increase their proficiency by allowing them the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills through rigorous and relevant learning opportunities.⁶ Each district school board must provide appropriate instruction to ensure that students meet State Board of Education (SBE) adopted standards in the following subject areas: reading and other language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign languages, health and physical education, and the arts.⁷

Instructional staff of public schools,⁸ subject to the rules of the SBE and the district school board, must shall teach efficiently and faithfully, using the books and materials required that meet the highest standards for professionalism and historical accuracy, following the prescribed courses of study, and employing approved methods of instruction, the following:⁹

- The history and content of the Declaration of Independence.

² Engels, Friedrich, *Principles of Communism, No. 4* – (1847), available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/11/prin-com.htm> (last visited Feb. 1, 2024).

³ Encyclopedia Britannica, *Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/dictatorship-of-the-proletariat> (last visited Feb. 1, 2021).

⁴ History, *The Russian Revolution*, available at <https://www.history.com/topics/russia/russian-revolution> (last visited Feb 1, 2024).

⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica, *Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/dictatorship-of-the-proletariat> (last visited Feb 1, 2024).

⁶ Section 1000.03(4), F.S.

⁷ Section 1003.42(1), F.S.

⁸ Instructional staff of charter schools are exempt from this section of law. Section 1002.33(16), F.S.

⁹ Section 1003.42(2), F.S.

- The history, meaning, significance, and effect of the provisions of the Constitution of the United States.
- The arguments in support of adopting our republican form of government.
- Flag education, including proper flag display and flag salute.
- The elements of civil government.
- The history of the United States.
- The history of the Holocaust.
- The history of African Americans.
- The elementary principles of agriculture.
- The effects of alcoholic and intoxicating liquors and beverages and narcotics.
- Kindness to animals.
- The history of the state.
- The conservation of natural resources.
- Comprehensive health education.
- The study of Hispanic contributions to the United States.
- The study of women’s contributions to the United States.
- The nature and importance of free enterprise to the United States economy.
- A character-development program in kindergarten through grade 12.
- The sacrifices that veterans and Medal of Honor recipients have made serving the country.

Between 1961¹⁰ and 1991,¹¹ Florida required the teaching of a 30-hour course of study for all students enrolled in public high schools entitled “Americanism vs. Communism.” The instruction included the history, doctrines, objectives and techniques of communism with particular emphasis upon the dangers of communism, the ways to fight communism, the evils of communism, the fallacies of communism, and the false doctrines of communism.¹²

Beginning in the 2023-24 school year, high school students enrolled in the United States Government class required to earn a standard high school diploma¹³ must receive at least 45 minutes of instruction on “Victims of Communism Day” to include topics such as Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution, Joseph Stalin and the Soviet System, Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution, Vladimir Lenin and the Russian Revolution, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, and Nicolás Maduro and the Chavismo movement, and how victims suffered under these regimes through poverty, starvation, migration, systemic lethal violence, and suppression of speech.¹⁴

The SBE is required to adopt and periodically review and revise the state academic standards.¹⁵ Such standards must provide for the logical, sequential progression of core curricular content.¹⁶

¹⁰ Chapter 61-77, Laws of Fla.

¹¹ Chapter 91-105, s. 81, Laws of Fla.

¹² Chapter 61-77, Laws of Fla.

¹³ Section 1003.4282(3)(d), F.S.

¹⁴ Section 683.334(3)(a), F.S.

¹⁵ Section 1001.03(1), F.S.

¹⁶ Section 1003.41(1), F.S.

The SBE has approved three standards related to communism, in grades 9-12 social studies, and in grade 7 civics and government.¹⁷

Victims of Communism

In addition to violations of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, loss of property rights, and the criminalization of ordinary economic activity, communist regimes in the 20th century intentionally killed their own citizens.¹⁸ One researcher compiled data from 1900 to 1987 related to state-sanctioned killings to provide a metric to consider when reflecting on the victims of communism and concluded that the Soviet Union was responsible for the deaths of over 61 million people. “Stalin himself is responsible for almost 43 million of these. Most of the deaths, around 39 million, are due to lethal forced labor in gulag and transit thereto.” Communist China (1923 – 1949) was responsible for about 3.5 million deaths, and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) (1949 – present) was responsible for an additional 35.2 million deaths.¹⁹

In Cambodia, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge likely killed about 2 million Cambodians from April 1975 through December 1978, out of a population of around 7 million.²⁰

In summary, from 1900 to 1987, communist dictators and regimes were responsible for the death of approximately 110 million individuals.²¹ In 1993, Congress made similar findings and authorized a national memorial to honor victims of communism. In addition to death, Congress found that “the imperialist regimes of international communism have brutally suppressed the human rights, national independence, religious liberty, intellectual freedom, and cultured life of the peoples of over 40 captive nations.” The purpose of the memorial is to permanently honor the sacrifices of these victims “so that never again will nations and peoples allow so evil a tyranny to terrorize the world.”²²

Victims of Communism Day

The first national day recognizing victims of communism was November 7, 2017. Currently, eight states have officially recognized November 7 as “Victims of Communism Memorial Day,” and seven other states currently have legislation filed to follow suit.²³ In 2022, Florida officially

¹⁷ The standards are: SS.912.W.6.3, Compare the philosophies of capitalism, socialism, and communism as described by Adam Smith, Robert Owen, and Karl Marx; SS.912.W.8.5, Identify the factors that led to the decline and fall of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; and SS.7.CG.3.15, Analyze the advantages of capitalism and the free market in the United States over government-controlled economic systems (e.g., socialism and communism) in regard to economic freedom and raising the standard of living for citizens. CPALMS, *Browse and Search Standards*, “communism” <https://www.cpalms.org/public/search/Standard> (last visited Feb. 1, 2024).

¹⁸ Ilya Somin, *Lessons from a Century of Communism*, Wash. Post, Nov. 7, 2017, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2017/11/07/lessons-from-a-century-of-communism/> (last visited Feb 1, 2024).

¹⁹ Rummel, R.J., *How Many Did Communist Regimes Murder?* (Nov. 1993) available at: <https://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/COM.ART.HTM> (last visited Feb 1, 2024).

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² Pub. L. No. 103-199, s. 905 (Dec. 17, 1993).

²³ Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, *Victims of Communism Memorial Day*, available at: <https://victimsofcommunism.org/programs/memory/voc-day/> (last visited Feb. 1, 2024).

recognized Victims of Communism Day and to be publicly observed in honor of the 110 million people who have fallen victim to communist regimes.²⁴

Executive Task Forces

A “task force” is an advisory body created without specific statutory enactment for a time not to exceed 1 year or created by specific statutory enactment for a time not to exceed 3 years and appointed to study a specific problem and recommend a solution or policy alternative with respect to that problem. Its existence terminates upon the completion of its assignment.²⁵

The task force must keep the Legislature and the public informed of the numbers, purposes, memberships, activities, and expenses of advisory bodies, commissions, boards of trustees, and other collegial bodies established as adjuncts to executive agencies.²⁶ A task force has the following characteristics:²⁷

- It meets a statutorily defined purpose.
- Its members, unless expressly provided otherwise in the State Constitution, are appointed for 4-year staggered terms.
- Its members, unless expressly provided otherwise by specific statutory enactment, serve without additional compensation or honorarium, and are authorized to receive only per diem and reimbursement for travel expenses.
- The private citizen members must be appointed by the Governor, the head of the department, the executive director of the department, or a Cabinet officer.
- Its meetings are public meetings, which must be open to the public at all times, and no resolution, rule, or formal action may be considered binding except as taken or made in public.²⁸

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill modifies s. 1003.42, F.S., to add to required instruction in public schools the history of communism. The bill requires each school district to annually certify to the Department of Education (DOE) that it has faithfully provided the required instruction on the history of communism in a format approved by the State Board of Education (SBE).

The bill creates s. 1003.441, F.S., to establish the History of Communism Task Force (task force) within the DOE, with membership appointed by the Governor. The task force is required to work with the Division of Historical Resources in the Department of State to make recommendations to the SBE and the Commissioner of Education for curriculum standards and instruction on the history of communism for kindergarten through grade 12. The bill requires that the instruction informs students that communism poses a threat to freedom. The recommendations are required by July 1, 2025, and must include the following:

- The history of domestic communist movements and their tactics within the United States.
- The philosophy and lineages of communist thought, including Marxism.

²⁴ Section 683.344, F.S.

²⁵ Section 20.03(5), F.S.

²⁶ Section 20.052(3), F.S.

²⁷ Section 20.052(4), F.S.

²⁸ Section 286.011, F.S.

- Foreign communist movements of the 20th century, the atrocities committed by such movements, and the threat they posed to the United States and its allies. The bill includes the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China as an example, and suggests instruction on other communist regimes, and the economic, industrial, and political events that preceded and contributed to the formation of such movements. However, the bill also includes as an example the Third Reich of Nazi Germany, which is generally accepted to have been a totalitarian dictatorship and not a communist state.
- The communist socioeconomic policies of Cuba, the history of the Communist Party of Cuba, and the spread of communism and communist guerrilla forces in Latin America.

The bill requires that the SBE develop curriculum on the history of communism based on the recommendations of the task force. Generally, the SBE adopts educational standards that must be integrated in curricula developed and employed by school districts.

The bill allows the task force to make a recommendation to the Legislature regarding the creation of a museum for communist history. The task force will expire on June 30, 2025, or earlier if recommendations to the DOE and the Legislature are made prior to that date.

The bill is effective July 1, 2024.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 1003.42 of the Florida Statutes.

This bill creates section 1003.441 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.