

Texas Textbooks.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 18, 2006

CONTACT:

Nancy Siefken

512-658-2731

PUBLISHERS URGE STATE LAWMAKERS TO HONOR GUARANTEE OF FREE TEXTBOOKS FOR ALL TEXAS K-12 STUDENTS

AUSTIN, TX (Oct. 18, 2006) – The Association of American Publishers (AAP) urged state lawmakers to proceed cautiously as it reviews the Texas process for providing instructional materials for public school students, during a Senate Education Committee hearing at the capitol today.

The Senate Education Committee, chaired by Senator Florence Shapiro and tasked with reviewing the process for state selection and purchasing of instructional materials for public schools, invited testimony from the publishing industry which provides instructional content in print, digital and online formats for purchase by the state.

Julie McGee, president/CEO of Harcourt Achieve, Professional and Trade testified before the Senate committee. McGee is a member of the executive committee of AAP's School Division. Her testimony is available at www.texastextbooks.org

The current system for providing instructional materials to Texas students ensures that materials are aligned with the state mandated curriculum. It also ensures that each child receives materials.

“The first goal should be to ‘do no harm’ to the current system,” said Jay Diskey, executive director of AAP's School Division. “New funding mechanisms for textbooks could bring unintended consequences. Texas is the envy of the nation when it comes to instructional materials for public schools because the state's constitution created an endowment trust to guarantee funds.”

“Our chief recommendation on any new funding mechanism is simple; it is always a good idea for there to be a consistency between the contracting entity and the funding entity,” Diskey said.

State textbook advocates also supported the call for simplicity and consistency in the state adoption process.

(more)

“If the process were changed from a state purchase system to an allotment method, as has been proposed, the Texas Legislature may unwittingly be creating inducements for school districts to send fewer, less comprehensive or even outdated instructional materials into the classroom. Any new textbook legislation would need to guarantee that schools and classrooms are not shortchanged on the number of materials or the quality of the content,” said Nancy Siefken, executive director of Texas Textbooks.Org, an online community of education groups representing subjects contained in upcoming textbook adoptions.

The committee’s review of the purchase of instructional materials is embedded in the interim charge to conduct an overview of the role and responsibilities of the State Board of Education (SBOE). The SBOE’s primary responsibility is the selection, review and purchase of instructional materials, in addition to setting curriculum standards and overseeing the standardized testing system for public schools. Progress reports on the SBOE and on the administration of the Permanent School Fund (PSF), were delivered by SBOE chair, Geraldine Miller, Texas Education Agency general counsel, David Anderson, and SBOE member Cynthia Thornton.

About Texas Textbooks.Org

Texas Textbooks. Org is an online community of parents, educators, school board members and advocates for quality instructional materials in Texas public schools. Texas Textbooks.Org has increased its scope to include advocates for subject matters in upcoming proclamations including the Texas Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Texas State Reading Association and Texas Association of Supervisors of Mathematics. Texas Textbooks.Org is now hosted by the Association of American Publishers.

About the Association of American Publishers

The Association of American Publishers is the national trade association of the U.S. book publishing industry. AAP’s more than 300 members include most of the major commercial publishers in the United States, as well as smaller and non-profit publishers, university presses and scholarly societies. AAP members publish hardcover and paperback books in every field, educational materials for the elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and professional markets, scholarly journals, computer software, and electronic products and services.