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## New state law requires textbooks to include gays' achievements

*'History should be honest,' Gov. Jerry Brown says in signing the state law, which had sparked hot debate among legislators.*

July 15, 2011 | By Patrick McGreevy, Los Angeles Times

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### Reporting from Sacramento

Gov. Jerry Brown signed legislation Thursday making California the first state to require that school textbooks and history lessons include the contributions of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans.

Brown took the action as lawmakers sent him scores of bills, including one that would allow undocumented immigrants access to privately financed student aid at state universities and colleges.

Before adjourning for a monthlong summer recess, the Legislature also proposed changing the way California holds presidential primary elections and awards its electoral votes.

In accepting a mandate that California students be taught the accomplishments of gays and lesbians, Brown said that "history should be honest." The bill, he said in a statement, "revises existing laws that prohibit discrimination in education and ensures that the important contributions of Americans from all backgrounds and walks of life are included in our history books."

The measure had sparked hot debate in the Legislature, where Republicans argued that it would force a "gay agenda" on young people against many of their parents' wishes. State Sen. Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) said the new law, which he wrote, will reduce the bullying of gay students by showing role models in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens.

"Denying LGBT people their rightful place in history gives our young people an inaccurate and incomplete view of the world around them," said Leno, whose bill, SB 48, also covers the role of the disabled in history.

The governor's action drew criticism from conservative groups.

Benjamin Lopez of the Anaheim-based Traditional Values Coalition said schools should be focused on improving students' reading, writing, math and other skills.

"It's a sad day for the state of California," said Lopez, a legislative analyst and advocate for the organization. "We have failed at our core educational mission, and yet we are now going to inject gay studies into the classrooms. It's absurd and offensive."

Controversy also surrounds the proposal to give undocumented immigrants a shot at privately funded financial aid in the California State University, California Community Colleges and University of California systems.

Brown is expected to approve the measure, AB 130, which is part of the California Dream Act. He declared during last year's election campaign that he would have signed a similar bill.

A separate proposal (AB 131) to permit students lacking legal status to receive publicly funded financial aid has stalled in the Senate. Assemblyman Gilbert Cedillo (D-Los Angeles) wrote both measures.

Arguing in favor of the private aid bill, state Sen. Ron Calderon (D-Montebello) said the state should not stand in the way of a college education for students who graduate from California high schools with good enough grades.

"Their accomplishment should not be disregarded or their future jeopardized because of their legal status," Calderon said during a floor debate before the Senate passed the measure on a largely party-line vote of 26-11.

Senate Republican Leader Bob Dutton of Rancho Cucamonga opposed the measure, saying it would give students false hope by helping them go to college even though they may not be able to get a job afterward because of their illegal status.

"If you don't have your citizenship squared away before you graduate, you cannot get a license to practice what you have been going to school for," Dutton said. "This is just doing an injustice to these young people."

The Senate also gave final legislative approval to a measure that would move California's presidential primary

election from February to June next year, saving \$100 million by consolidating the presidential vote with the normal statewide primary. California had previously moved its presidential primary to February in hopes of gaining more sway in the national contest, but many other states also moved their votes to that month.

State Sen. Kevin De Leon (D-Los Angeles) said that at a time when government is facing financial problems, it doesn't make sense to incur the extra cost of holding a presidential primary in February in addition to a statewide primary in June and a general election in November.

"We have to be fiscally prudent with the taxpayer dollars," De Leon said.

State Sen. Tony Strickland (R-Moorpark) opposed the bill, arguing that the state could restore some clout and still save money by combining the state and presidential primaries in March.

"Too many times California is ignored," Strickland said. But the proposal, AB 80 by Assemblyman Paul Fong (D-Sunnyvale), passed 34-3.

Similar concern was behind another measure sent to the governor Thursday. Both houses voted to allow California to join other states in awarding electoral votes to the presidential ticket that receives the most popular votes nationwide in a general election.

California currently gives all of its 55 electoral votes to the ticket that receives the most votes in the state.

Because the state is heavily Democratic, candidates often write it off as a place to campaign, instead focusing their attention on battlegrounds where the vote is more competitive.

"This bill will make California relevant in the long run," forcing candidates to discuss issues important to Californians, said Assemblyman Jerry Hill (D-San Mateo), author of the bill, AB 459.

Some Republican lawmakers, including Sen. Doug La Malfa of Richvale, fought the measure, which passed 23-15 in the Senate and 49-5 in the lower house and went to the governor.

"It flies in the face of 220 years of election law in the United States for deciding a president," La Malfa said.

The change would take effect only if adopted by states with a majority of the electoral votes, which has not yet occurred.

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