

# Letter to the Editor March 27 2021

Why Would The State Department of Education Oppose a Law That Would Ensure Media Literacy Is Taught in Schools?

By Frank Baker

That's the question all of us are asking after the House Education/Public Works Committee failed to pass a measure (March 16) that would have created an "advisory task force" to investigate how media literacy is represented (or not) in the K-12 curriculum.

Richland Representative Seth Rose introduced the measure earlier this year, and thanks go to Rep. Raye Felder for efforts to get it passed. State Department of Education officials testified they were not opposed to creating a task force. But during the first hearing on the measure, members of the committee balked at "another task force." One committee member testified he didn't know what "media literacy" meant even though it was defined in the measure.

The State Department of Education (SDE) claims we already teach media literacy. We disagree. I challenge our education officials (and lawmakers) to find references to propaganda, media bias, social media, media literacy, techniques of persuasion, and stereotypes in the K-12 standards. (None of these exist.)

SDE has evidence that the majority of middle and high school students need additional instruction because they've failed to identify bias in a passage in the most recent SC Ready test. Teaching this skill should be a priority. But it's not. That's troubling.

What's more troubling is an education department that is aware of these deficiencies (and omissions) and does nothing about

it.

This is not the action of a responsible education agency. If there are no moves to improve “media literacy” instruction, our students will continue to be “left behind.”