

# The Delray Democrat

## New Florida Laws: The Push Toward Evangelizing and Whitewashing Our Public Schools <sup>1</sup>

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Effective July 1, 2024, here is the good, the bad, and the truly ugly, such as the Republicans' obsession to turn Florida into a religious autocracy, particularly their attempts to evangelize our public schools. And their contempt for truth as they pretend racial bigotry and inequality never existed.

### **HB 1291. Prohibits “Woke” in Teacher Training (Shameful)**

“Florida is where WOKE comes to die,” has been Governor DeSantis’s oral bumper sticker. He promised to keep Woke, and the dreaded Critical Race Theory, out of our public schools. He even signed a [W.O.K.E. law](#) “Stop the Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees [Act](#),” Easy victory, since neither were taught here.

And to ensure the phantom subjects don’t find their way in, our teachers will be at the ready. Their new training “May not distort significant historical events or include a curriculum or instruction that teaches identity politics or that “systemic racism, sexism, oppression, and privilege [White] are inherent in the institutions of the United States.”

As per DeSantis’s many press releases and interviews, “distort” means that slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the internment of Japanese Americans, The Indian Removal Act, the decades of discrimination against Latinos and LGBTQ+ people just didn’t happen.

### **HB 1285. “Classical Education” Teaching Certificates.**

The State Board of Education will establish rules for those who wish to teach at a “classical” school, one that teaches the “development of moral character and civic virtue, the liberal arts and sciences...and is based on the classical trivium stages of grammar, logic, and rhetoric.”

Teacher applicants are *exempt from “demonstrating mastery of both general and subject knowledge, professional preparation and education [competence](#).”* The exemptions caused teacher and Democratic Rep. Ashley Gantt of Miami-Dade County to question, “What measurement are we using to make sure that they’re qualified [and]... adhering to whatever curriculum is developed and... actually have the ability to [teach that?](#)”

But accepting people without traditional education and experience has become a way for DeSantis to deal with Florida’s severe teacher shortage, such as allowing veterans and retired firefighters without bachelor’s degrees, and others with only two-year degrees, to teach with mentors. A 2023 study by the [Learning Policy Institute](#) showed Florida to have the lowest “teacher attractiveness”

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<sup>1</sup> [The Delray Democrat](#), July 2024, page 4.

rating in the nation.

**[HB 1285](#)**. Limits the number of requests to **Ban Books** (Republicans call them “challenges”), by non-parents to one title per month. DeSantis accused “‘activist’ teachers of making a ‘mockery’ of his parental rights legislation by filing frivolous challenges. Parents (like the lunatic Moms for Liberty) have no limits. [PEN America](#), the writers’ organization that’s fighting book banning, reports that Florida is responsible for 72% of the books that have been pulled from the nation’s schools in the first half of the current school year.

**[SB 1264](#)**. **Schools Must Teach “the evils of Communism.”** “The truth will set us free,” said DeSantis in a press release. (Yes, he really did.)

**[HB 931](#)**. **Allows chaplains to counsel students in public schools.** Beyond the frightening, anti-democratic melding of church and state, the law doesn’t require the chaplains to demonstrate any credentials. In addition, some faiths condemn as sins suicide, homosexuality and abortion, issues that demand trained psychology or psychiatry [professionals](#) .

**[HB 1317](#)** **Patriotic Organizations Welcome in Public Schools.** Specifically named are Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Civil Air Patrol, Farmers of America, Little Leagues Baseball, Marine Corps League, and the Navy SEAL Cadet Corps. However, the schools don’t have to allow in any groups that aren’t designated “patriotic.”

## **Politics**

### **HB 919**

**Artificial Intelligence in Political Ads.** Ads that depict real people person doing things that they never did must disclose the use of A.I. A violation can result in a first-degree misdemeanor charge. (Big deal. If the ad is full of lies, the damage is done.)

## **Health (good)**

**[HB 159](#)**. **HIV prevention in pharmacies.** Florida is among the states with the highest number of new HIV cases in the country. Now, pharmacists can prescribe and dispense medicine to prevent HIV infection after exposure if taken within 72 hours.

### **HB 935 — Home Health Care Services**

Home health services can now be paid by Medicaid if prescribed by advanced practice registered nurses or physician assistants.

**And now, for some good stuff:**

**[SB 544](#)** **Free swimming lessons.** Florida will offer swimming lessons at no cost to families with a household income of less than \$45,180 a year and who have at least one child who is four years of age or younger, according to the Swimming Lesson Voucher Program. [Florida has the highest rate of child-drowning deaths](#), ages 1-4 and 0-9 in the nation.

[HB 187](#) **Anti-Semitism.** Defines antisemitism as calling for the deaths of Jewish people, stereotyping them and Holocaust denial.

[HB 1109](#) - **Jewish Day Schools and Preschools.** Allows security funding, as recommended by professionals.

[HB 1181](#) **Juvenile Justice.** Sets out rules for dealing with minors with illegal possession of firearms.

Oh yes, you *can't* release balloons in the air [HB 321](#) and you *can* shoot a bear if it attacks you. [HB 87](#)