



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Open Letter to the Arkansas Department of Education

The Arkansas Democratic Black Caucus requests the reinstatement of AP-African American Studies as a smart core credit and acknowledge it as an advanced placement course by College Board

LITTLE ROCK, ARK – The Arkansas Democratic Black Caucus, an official auxiliary of the Democratic Party of Arkansas submitted a letter to Secretary of Education Jacob Oliva condemning the last-minute decision to remove the AP-African American Studies from its official list of approved AP smart core credits.

August 14, 2023

Mr. Jacob Oliva
Secretary, Arkansas Department of Education
Arkansas Department of Education
Four Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201

Dear Mr. Oliva,

The Arkansas Democratic Black Caucus strongly condemns the Arkansas Department of Education's last-minute decision to exclude the Advanced Placement (AP) course on African American Studies. We strongly urge you to reinstate the course as a smart core credit and acknowledge it as an advanced placement course by College Board and pay for the AP exam like other AP courses offered this school year.

It was almost 66 years ago that Governor Orval Faubus ordered the Arkansas National Guardsmen to block nine Black students from entering Central High School the night before classes began. This nearly midnight action by your department is eerily reminiscent of those tactics from 1957. Rather than physical barriers, this recent change has created financial and logistical obstacles for students hoping to boost their GPAs with AP college credits, and for teachers who prepared the course materials.

This is just one of several attempts to engineer a red wave that didn't occur in the 2022 midterm elections across our nation. The same way that Governor Ron DeSantis says he wants to "Make America Florida," Governor Sarah Sanders wants to "Make Arkansas Florida." In making this audacious decision, the Sanders' administration showed once again how unconcerned and disconnected it is with Arkansas' well-being. Political stunts like this feel like they were pulled from the GOP playbook designed to gain national attention and satisfy the far-right minority. They force states to tolerate extremist viewpoints at the expense of our children.

In Governor Sanders' response to President Joe Biden's 2023 State of the Union, she referenced the heroism of the Little Rock Nine and how proud she is of the progress our country has made. It would make sense, then, to allow our students a quality history education by learning about the progress of African Americans in our country.

Make a far-reaching bold change and reverse your decision today!

Cordially,

Debrah Mitchell, President
Arkansas Democratic Black Caucus

About the Arkansas Democratic Black Caucus

The Arkansas Democratic Black Caucus was established in 1982 as an extension of the Democratic Party of Arkansas. It provides a vehicle, within the Democratic Party of Arkansas, to address the concerns of African Americans. The objective of this organization is to achieve proportionate representation of African American Democratic public officials, elected or appointed in Arkansas; foster election of and monitor the performance of all elected officials and disseminate information to the African American community through effective communication.

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