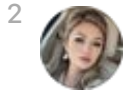




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# Governor Newsom Missed Opportunity to Correct Legislative Oversight by Vetoing AB 1393: Laotian History and Cultural Studies

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## Governor Newsom Missed Opportunity to Correct Legislative Oversight by Vetoing [AB 1393](#): Laotian History and Cultural Studies

Sacramento, California (October 12, 2019) -- [Governor Gavin Newsom](#) vetoed [AB 1393](#) (Weber) Laotian History and Cultural Studies. The Laotian American community is deeply disappointed by his inaction and finds his reason for the veto to be inherently flawed. Rather than considering the bill on its merits, he took the route of political expediency due to the intense controversy surrounding the [Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum](#) under development by the [Instructional Quality Commission](#) (IQC) in accordance with [AB 2016](#) (Alejo).

Through the passage of [SB 895](#) (Nguyen, 2018), the IQC is required to develop and submit to the

[State Board of Education](#) (SBE) a model curriculum relative to the Vietnamese American refugee experience, a model curriculum relative to the Cambodian genocide, and a model curriculum in Hmong history and cultural studies. The history of Laotian refugees and the country of Laos, which is inseparable from the history of the Vietnam War, were not included in [SB 895](#).

Hence, the [Laotian American Advocacy Coalition](#) comprised of 60+ organizations across the state came together to push for new legislation that will correct the oversight in [SB 895](#). After several months of advocacy, the group gathered over 15,000 signatures and confirmed [Assemblywoman Dr. Shirley Weber \(D-San Diego\)](#) to author a clean-up bill - [AB 1393](#) Laotian History and Cultural Studies. If passed, the bill would add Laotian history and cultural studies to account for restoring historical accuracy and thus credibility to the dissemination of information pertaining to the Vietnam War and the Secret War in Laos. [AB 1393](#) received unanimous bipartisan support with zero opposition. It was amended in the Assembly Education Committee, where the bill language was folded into existing language of [SB 895](#) Hmong section and required no additional cost nor pose significant fiscal impact to the State. Furthermore, in August, we worked with Jennifer Johnson, the Education Consultant in the Governor's Office, and agreed to all proposed amendments before the bill got to his desk for his signature. Our communication with her indicated she had a clear understanding of the bill, was in support of it, and we had nothing to worry about.

Governor Newsom's veto of [AB 1393](#) was an absolute shock to the Laotian American Advocacy Coalition and the greater Laotian American community. In his [veto message](#), Governor Newsom states he is "concerned that the current process is piecemeal and fragmented, as the adoption of the ethnic studies model has displayed." He went on to propose that "a review of the existing process is necessary to support reforms needed so our schools can provide instruction in a manner that reflects and honors the experiences of all Californians." Ironically, that was the sole purpose of [AB 1393](#) - to ensure inclusion and accuracy of the historical accounting related to the Vietnam War, the Secret War in Laos and the refugee experiences from Vietnam, Cambodian and Laos. By vetoing [AB 1393](#), he contradicted his own vision for instruction in California's K-12 schools. Without signing [AB 1393](#) into law, the model curricula developed by [SB 895](#) is more likely to be fragmented, incomplete, and inaccurate because the requirements of [SB 895](#) does not include Laos in the Vietnam War, the Secret War in Laos, and Laotian refugees.

Founded in 2006, Lao American Advancement Organization ([LAAO](#)) is a US-based nonprofit grassroots organization which recognizes the truly diverse and multi-faceted nature of Lao Americans and thus strives to create a community of acceptance through the pursuit of educational achievements, advocacy of professional and social support services, as well as innovation of progressive cultural and recreational programs. Our mission is to progress as pursuant to knowledge for unity through education, innovation, and community advocacy.

While disheartened and greatly disappointed by the Governor's veto on [AB 1393](#), the [LAAO](#) will continue in partnership with the [Laotian American Advocacy Coalition](#) (see joint statement) to push for inclusion of Laotian American history and cultural studies in the forthcoming ethnic studies model curriculum and model curricula developed in accordance with [SB 895](#). We will closely monitor the progress of the [Model Curriculum Projects](#) and advocate directly with the IQC and SBE. We will reach out to the Governor's Office to educate them about the Laotian American community, culture, and history. We will also stay in close communication with Dr. Weber's Office to leverage her commitment and support to our community as indicated in her [statement in response to the Governor's veto of AB 1393](#).

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