



Mandates on Holocaust and Genocide Education in the United States

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INTRODUCTION

A 2020 telephone polling study commissioned by the Claims Conference: Jewish Material Claims Against Germany showed “significant gaps in knowledge about the Holocaust” among all Americans and particularly among Millennials. A large portion of the population in the United States under the age of 35 is unaware of key events that transpired, such as names of well-known camps and those culpable for the genocidal atrocities.¹ These findings echo a 2019 Pew Research Center survey based on multiple choice questions which showed that younger Americans and

¹ Holocaust Knowledge Awareness Study. (2018). Retrieved November, 2020, from https://www.claimscon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Holocaust-Knowledge-Awareness-Study_Executive-Summary-2018.pdf.

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particularly “teens display lower levels of knowledge about the Holocaust than their elders do.”²

This growing lack of Holocaust awareness coincides with a rise in hate crimes across the United States. The heinous attack on the Pittsburgh Tree-of-Life-Synagogue in 2018 is but one example of such increasing violence. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), between 2019 and 2020 alone there were more than 10,000 reported incidents of antisemitism in the United States.³ Others are targets of violence as well. Concern about anti-Black, anti-Asian, anti-Muslim, and other forms of violence also explains the need to include different forms of discrimination and other genocides in the curriculum.

This report studied the 21 states that have passed legislation mandating Holocaust education in some capacity. Of these, 16 also included teaching other genocides such as the Armenian Genocide. The report offers a timeline and an investigation of the motivations for such legislation, demonstrating a renewed urgency to pass Holocaust bills since 2018. What is more, the report explores differences in such legislation in three dimensions, which all influence the impact of such bills:

- the strength of mandates as expressed in the wording, its embeddedness in state standards, and the inclusion of other genocides,
- the creation of taskforces and commissions to assist school districts in teaching the Holocaust, train teachers, and hold districts accountable in whether and how well they teach the Holocaust, and
- funding (or lack thereof) allocated to such taskforces and commissions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This report relies on two main sources of information. First, the author used all publicly available information on 21 states that introduced bills with mandates ranging from “requiring” to “strongly encouraging”

² What Americans know about the Holocaust (2020, May 30). Retrieved November, 2020, from <https://www.pewforum.org/2020/01/22/what-americans-know-about-the-holocaust/>.

³ ADL H.E.A.T. MAP. (2020). Retrieved November, 2020, from <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resource-knowledge-base/adl-heat-map>.

Holocaust education. States using weaker language such as “welcoming” Holocaust education were excluded⁴ as they did not directly require Holocaust education. From the legislative texts, key vocabulary and further provisions on funding and taskforces/commissions were identified and correlated with state standards. A list of these bills and state standards as pdf links is included in Appendix A.

These texts, however, say little about the actual implementation of their goals, potential shortcomings, or successes. In a second step, this information was supplemented with interviews with key stakeholders in 17 out of 21 states depending on their availability. The interviews were conducted between November 2020 and May 2021 over email, over the phone, or sometimes both. These stakeholders were identified among members of taskforces/commissions and professionals in the field such as teachers, staff at museums, university professors, and Department of Education officials. Names were generated through reference, research, and connections and were contacted via email and phone. A list of the interview partners with affiliations is included as Appendix 2, and quotes from these interactions are highlighted in *course* in the report.

The data compiled in this report is muddled by proverbial moving goalposts and murky reporting. During the writing of this report, Wisconsin and Arizona, for example, passed legislation and North Carolina⁵ may well have passed a bill by the time this report meets its readers. This report is a still life also with respect to legislative texts

⁴ There is no universally agreed metric of such bills. Echoes and Reflections, for example, uses a different methodology to assess the strength of legislation distinguishing between Holocaust education requirements and “permissive status” that mentions but does not require Holocaust education. However, permissive status also entails very different commitments to Holocaust education. This category ranges from welcoming “the Alabama State Department of Education’s stated commitment to ensuring Alabama students have access to quality Holocaust education” to strongly encouraging “to include in its curriculum instruction on the events of the period in modern world history known as the Holocaust” (Washington). Interactive map. (2020). Retrieved November, 2020, from <https://echoesandreflections.org/interactive-map/>. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum groups these mandates again differently to identify 19 different states that require Holocaust education. Where Holocaust Education is Required in the US. (2020). Retrieved November, 2020, from <https://www.ushmm.org/teach/fundamentals/where-holocaust-education-is-required-in-the-us>.

⁵ Education on the Holocaust and Genocide, H.R., 69, 115C-81.57, 2021, <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2021/Bills/House/PDF/H69v1.pdf>.

and corresponding standards that are constantly updated. New Jersey⁶ and Florida,⁷ for example, updated their 1994 bills in 2013 and 2020, respectively. Taskforces and commissions also frequently change. They are often unofficially formed, and changes, sometimes even their existence, may not show up on state Department of Education websites. As this report shows, their impact is enormous nonetheless. Official funding is rare—only three states (Florida, New Jersey, and Colorado) have allocated modest funds. Persons interviewed for this report, however, stressed that private funding and in-kind contributions from museums, universities, and communities as well as countless hours of volunteer work somewhat disguise this shortcoming. While the report highlights the presence of these efforts, it cannot quantify them.

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION BILLS: WHY AND WHY NOW?

There are 21 states that have passed legislation that requires or strongly encourages Holocaust education be taught in public schools. The earliest Holocaust education legislation was passed in 1994 in New Jersey and Florida followed suit shortly thereafter. A majority of such bills (12), however, have been put in place since 2018. Table 3.1 shows each state that has Holocaust education legislation and the date when they were enacted.

The proliferation of Holocaust education bills in recent years is a response to contemporary challenges. In particular, interview partners mentioned as their motivations combatting rising anti-Semitism and prejudice, fostering civic virtues at a time of intense polarization, creating awareness for the Holocaust as public knowledge recedes, and preserving the memory of the events as more and more survivors pass away.

Often antisemitic instances are the focal point behind the desire for new or updated legislation. A 2020 update to Florida's 1994 bill, for example, mandates "instruction related to antisemitism" echoed by a Pennsylvania bill from 2014 that strongly encourages teaching

⁶ 2013 new Jersey Revised statutes:: Title 18A - Education:: Sect. 18A:4A-2 - New JERSEY Commission on HOLOCAUST EDUCATION. (2013). Retrieved November, 2020, from <https://law.justia.com/codes/new-jersey/2013/title-18a/section-18a-4a-2/>.

⁷ Educational Instruction of Historical Events, H.R., 1213, 2020-88, 2020, <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2020/1213/BillText/er/PDF>.

Table 3.1 Mandate States and Adoption Dates

<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
New Jersey	3/1994
Florida	4/1994 (updated 1/2020)
California	2/2001
Illinois	8/2005
Virginia	3/2009
Indiana	3/2014
Pennsylvania*	6/2014
Michigan	5/2016
New York	4/2017
Kentucky	4/2018
Rhode Island	5/2018
Connecticut	5/2018
Texas*	6/2019
Washington*	7/2019
Delaware	6/2020
Oregon	7/2020
Colorado	7/2020
New Hampshire	7/2020
Wisconsin	4/2021
Arkansas	4/2021
Arizona	7/2021

*These states' bills do not mandate Holocaust education; rather, it is highly encouraged

“antisemitism, racism and the abridgment of civil rights.”⁸ In July of 2021, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey (R) released a press statement citing antisemitic incidences across the state “in Queen Creek, Chandler and (...) at the Chabad on River Synagogue in Tucson” as reason for this legislation.⁹ Bills also often invoke that “teaching the lessons learned from the Holocaust and other genocides helps cultivate the spirit

⁸ Florida: Educational Instruction of Historical Events, H.R., 1213, 2020-88, 2020, <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2020/1213/BillText/er/PDF>. Pennsylvania: Public School Code of 1949-Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Violations Instruction, H.R., 1424, 2014,

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/li/uconsCheck.cfm?yr=2014&sessInd=0&act=70>.

⁹ Office of the Arizona Governor. (2021, July 09). Governor Ducey Signs Holocaust Education Bill. Retrieved August 1, 2021, from <https://azgovernor.gov/governor/news/2021/07/governor-ducey-signs-holocaust-education-bill>.

of human resilience, courage, heroism, and tolerance.”¹⁰ In addition to rising anti-Semitism and cultivating civic virtues, other efforts cite the lack of students’ knowledge of the Holocaust. Sharon Greenwald, an author and interview partner for this report who lobbied Texas lawmakers to pass a Holocaust education bill, noted as inspiration, Rhonda Fink-Whitman’s video interviews with Pennsylvania public school graduates in 2013. Fink-Whitman’s video interviews (which, should be stated, were edited to reveal striking differences) revealed how little students knew about the Holocaust.¹¹ Finally, some bills specifically reference the need to “preserve the memories of survivors of genocide and provide opportunities for students to discuss and honor survivors’ cultural legacies” (Oregon 01/2020 and verbatim Delaware 06/2020).¹² Today’s bills are thus embedded in well-publicized contexts, especially rising anti-Semitism and violence against other minorities, lack of students’ knowledge, and the need to preserve the testimony of survivors, whose numbers are dwindling.

The urgency connected to these contemporary issues not only sped up the proliferation of Holocaust education bills in recent years, it also increased the speed with which they moved through the process. Once the bills were introduced in state legislatures, it took anywhere between a few months to over a year for them to be passed. States whose mandates took less than six months include Oregon, Washington, Florida (to update its existing mandate), Texas, Kentucky, and Connecticut. Colorado, Illinois, California, Delaware, and New Hampshire took between six and 12 months, while New York, Michigan, and Pennsylvania all took more than one year. Wisconsin and Arizona are outliers, as the legislative process was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁰ An Act to Amend Title 14 of the Delaware Code Relating to Holocaust and Genocide Education, H.R., 318, 150, 2020, <https://legis.delaware.gov/json/BillDetail/GenerateHtmlDocumentEngrossment?engrossmentId=23978&docTypeId=6>.

¹¹ Fink-Whitman, R. (Director). (2013, September 27). *94 Maidens-The Mandate Video* [Bmm6yJMw]. Retrieved August 1, 2021, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4V4bmm6yJMw>.

¹² Oregon: A Bill for an Act, S., 664, 2020, <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2019R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/SB664/Introduced>.

Delaware: An Act to Amend Title 14 of the Delaware Code Relating to Holocaust and Genocide Education, H.R., 318, 150, 2020, <https://legis.delaware.gov/json/BillDetail/GenerateHtmlDocumentEngrossment?engrossmentId=23978&docTypeId=6>.

This recent proliferation and pace of passage of such bills can also be attributed to support from institutions such as museums, universities and community groups, increased funding, hiring lobbyists, and moderation of goals. Several respondents mentioned the support of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum nationally, local universities and museums such as the Oregon Jewish Museum, and Jewish and other communities as vital for the passage of such bills. Without dedicated and overwhelmingly unpaid individuals in such organizations, these bills would not be on the books today. Equally important was that these individuals managed to acquire funding and with that political experience. Nelson Hersh, who serves on the board of the Holocaust Memorial Center in Farmington, Maine, for example, pointed to the impact of individual philanthropy that funded not only content experts but also a lobbyist to ensure passage of the bill. With political know-how also came a prioritization and moderation of goals. Sharon Greenwald from Texas mentioned in an email that legislation bypassing teaching Holocaust education as essential curriculum under the Texas Education Code and instead establishing a separate statute under the Texas Education Code mandating one week of Holocaust instruction for all Texas school districts in all grade levels *“allowed for 100 percent bipartisan support and swift passage of SB 1828. The clear pro with this approach was phenomenally quick passage. The clear cons with this approach are no direct public funding and no structured task force to ensure success as of this date.”* She expressed hope that the Federal Never Again Education Act, enacted to allow the United States Holocaust Museum to fund and expand its education programs and education materials uniformly to US schools, would make state funding less essential.¹³

In short, we have Holocaust education bills today because we need them to address contemporary challenges, especially antisemitism, and because their proponents became experienced operators in building coalitions, fundraising, political lobbying, and limiting themselves to attainable goals. Beyond just passing the mandates, it is crucial that the legislation is actually implemented effectively in schools. In the next section, the mandates are analyzed for their strengths and weaknesses.

¹³ Never Again Education Act, H.R., 943, 116, 2020, <https://www.congress.gov/bills/116/congress/house-bill/943/text>.

STRENGTH OF HOLOCAUST EDUCATION BILLS

In the absence of one clear measure of a bill’s strength, data from our content analysis of legislative language revealed three factors that influence the impact of such legislation:

- the strength of the mandate to teach the Holocaust in the bills’ wording,
- the bills’ embeddedness in school standards and guidance through state Departments of Education or Superintendents of Public Instruction, and
- the inclusion of other genocides and the potential collaboration with other interest groups.

Confronted with obvious concerns such as rising anti-Semitism and pressured by increasingly experienced groups, lawmakers were willing to endow bills with robust language. The states’ legislation uses verbs such as “must include,” “mandate,” and “require” to strengthen their bills. Even weaker wording such as, “shall include,” “provide,” or “ensure,” still offer a stiffer mandate than “shall incorporate” or “strongly encourage” used in Pennsylvania and Washington. Table 3.2 below highlights the language used in each of the mandates, varying in levels of strength based on which vocabulary was chosen.

Lawmakers in some states offered not only strong wording, but also explicitly linked the bill to state standards and precise instructions on when and how often the Holocaust be taught. Oregon’s bill from July 2020, for example, “requires school districts to provide instruction about the Holocaust and genocide beginning with the 2020–2021 school year.”¹⁴ The bill also specifies design principles for such instructions that the Oregon Department of Education then directly translated into its standards for different grade levels.¹⁵ The law then calls on the department to work with organizations “whose primary purpose is Holocaust

¹⁴ A Bill for an Act, S., 664, 2020, <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2019R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/SB664/Introduced>.

¹⁵ *664 Grade Level Guidance*. Oregon Department of Education. (n.d.). Retrieved November 18, 2020, from [https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/socialsciences/Documents/664%20grade%20level%20guidance%20Web%20accessible%20\(002\).pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/socialsciences/Documents/664%20grade%20level%20guidance%20Web%20accessible%20(002).pdf).

Table 3.2 Mandate Language used Per State

<i>States that use:</i>	<i>Name of State(s)</i>
“Must include”	New Jersey
“Mandating”	Texas
“Requires”	California Colorado Florida Oregon Rhode Island
“Shall include”	Connecticut Indiana Illinois Kentucky Arizona
“Shall provide”	Delaware
“Shall ensure”	Michigan New Hampshire New York
“Shall select/distribute”	Virginia
“Shall be”	Arkansas
“Incorporate”	Wisconsin
“Strongly encouraged”	Pennsylvania Washington

and genocide studies.” Amit Kobrowski from the Oregon Department of Education in an email particularly flagged the Oregon Jewish Museum and its Center for Holocaust Education as partners “*helping teachers who are on the early adopter path on the Learning Concepts identified in the bill.*”

Oregon is not alone in issuing such a detailed mandate, incorporating it in its state standards, and fostering partnerships with outside partners. Michigan also clearly identified when and in which subject the Holocaust and other genocides be taught. School districts were asked to ensure that the “social studies curriculum for grades 8 to 12 include age- and grade-appropriate instruction about genocide, including, but not limited to, the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide.”¹⁶

¹⁶ The Revised School Code, S., 4493, 2016, <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2015-2016/billconcurrent/House/pdf/2015-HCB-4493.pdf>.

Such clear mandates stand in contrast to states such as Connecticut¹⁷ and Pennsylvania,¹⁸ which felt that by not emphasizing a particular age group, their bills were easier to pass. As a result, school districts had little guidance on how and when to introduce the topic. As Michael Bloom, the Executive Director of the Jewish Federation Association of Connecticut, noted, the lack of guidance frustrated school principals who were scrambling to insert the topic in a variety of subjects. This made worse already existing pressures on teachers to teach too many subjects with too little time.

In Washington, a weaker bill that only “strongly encouraged” middle and high schools to include the Holocaust in its curriculum not surprisingly failed to make a specific connection to the state standards altogether.¹⁹ To their credit, however, lawmakers were specific in other areas to offer guidance to school districts. For example, they adopted a close approximation of the USHMM definition of the Holocaust in the bill as “the systemic, German state-sponsored persecution and murder of Jews and other innocent victims by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between the years 1933 and 1945.”²⁰ They also charged the superintendent of public instruction to create teaching resources in conjunction with the Holocaust Center for Humanity in Seattle. This helped the center to raise funds for a staff position in Holocaust education. Still, as Paul Regelbrugge from the center wrote in an email, “*progress in our ‘strongly encouraged’ work regarding Holocaust education*” is difficult as “*an awful lot of districts (...) don’t even respond to our many emails and other targeted outreach efforts.*”

¹⁷ An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Holocaust and Genocide Education and Awareness in the Social Studies Curriculum, S., 452, 18-24, 2018, <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2018/ACT/pa/pdf/2018PA-00024-R00SB-00452-PA.pdf>.

¹⁸ Public School Code of 1949-Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Violations Instruction, H.R., 1424, 2014, <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/li/uconsCheck.cfm?yr=2014&sessInd=0&act=70>.

¹⁹ *Washington State K-12 Learning Standards for Social Studies*. Washington State Department of Education. (n.d.). Retrieved November 18, 2020, from https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/socialstudies/standards/OSPI_SocStudies_Standards_2019.pdf.

²⁰ An Act Relating to Holocaust Education, S., 5612, 66, 2019, <http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2019-20/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/5612-S.PL.pdf?q=20201118212309>.

This sentiment regarding mandate language and its policy implementation was echoed numerous times. Josey Fisher, the Director of the Holocaust Oral History Archive at Gratz College in Pennsylvania, said, for example, “*Having a mandate means nothing unless teachers know what they’re doing.*” Bills therefore have to be connected to standards and be flanked by guidelines and supervision through Departments of Education or Superintendents at the state and district levels. Although Washington and Pennsylvania have weaker language in their bills, states with stronger mandates struggle with the same problem. As Millie Jasper, Executive Director at the Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center in White Plains, NY, mentioned “*(It is) very good for the state of New York to say they have a mandate but that’s it. (... It was actually) New York state education department that mandated that there be Holocaust, genocide, and human rights education.*”

By including mandates to teach the Holocaust and other genocides, bills reviewed for this study largely avoided competition between different groups and opened doors for other supporters of the bill to join.²¹ This was quite intentional. A person involved in Holocaust education in Oregon that did not want to be identified for this study wrote that they were “*advocating to call it a genocide mandate not Holocaust and genocide. The Holocaust is an example of a genocide and should not be pulled out as separate. (...) our bill was that it was genocide inclusive and requires teachers to educate on genocides beyond the Holocaust. The name is misleading—but this was a battle I wasn’t going to win.*” Even if they were unsuccessful in getting a bill solely focused on genocide, Oregon is one of 16 states studied in this report, whose bills reference the Holocaust and other genocides. Only five (Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, New York, and Texas) focus only on the Holocaust, albeit often with reference to broad issues such as Human Rights. Josey Fisher of Pennsylvania mentioned “*Specific districts in the state needed to focus on broader issues or issues that are connected to their populations*” thus enabling broader coalitions to include other issues in such legislation. Some bills go so

²¹ Competition between different victim groups has sometimes hampered commemorative efforts in diverse settings, for example, at Buchenwald and Mittelbau Dora Foundation that commemorates the Nazi concentration camps and the Soviet/East German internment camp at the same site. Bill Niven, *The Buchenwald Child. Truth, Fiction, and Propaganda* (Rochester: Camden House 2007), p. 203.

far to identify specific genocides to be taught,²² while most leave this to state standards, which, for example, in Connecticut’s case list “human rights violations in the modern world (e.g., Armenian genocide, Nanking Massacre, Holocaust, Amritsar Massacre, Chinese Cultural Revolution, Syrian Civil War).” Connecticut also asks students to “evaluate the role of the United States during the Holocaust.”²³ Although some bills and standards explicitly point to the United Nations definition of Genocide,²⁴ others just list atrocities without clear reference to this definition. In either case, no bill or state standard anywhere mandates how much time should be devoted to other genocides or offers pathways to the comparative study of genocides.²⁵

No one factor alone governs the strengths of Holocaust education bills. Yet, endowing bills with strong language, linking them to state standards and public school administrations with specific instructions on when and how to teach it in different grade levels makes the mandates stronger. Together, these measures give outsize weight to such bills and garner more support relative to those efforts that lack any one of these components.

TASKFORCES AND COMMISSIONS

Passing strong bills does not guarantee implementation, even if bills are embedded in state standards and enforced by state Departments of Education and Superintendents. For some states, the legislative process therefore included the creation of a statewide taskforce or commission to support their respective Departments of Education, Superintendents, and school districts. Florida, Illinois, Michigan, and New Jersey are such

²² For example, California: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OqcDkrHkQLIpnzmTp0b0Bf14fv43nh6utWPWMRYrPA/edit#>.

²³ Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Frameworks. (2015, February). Retrieved November 19, 2020, from <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Social-Studies/ssframeworks.pdf>.

²⁴ For example, Kentucky: An Act Relating to Instruction on the Holocaust and Other Acts of Genocide, H.R., 128, 2018, <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/recorddocuments/bill/18RS/hb128/bill.pdf>.

²⁵ Kluessien, K., & Ramos, C. (2016, October). A Matter of Comparison: The Holocaust, Genocides, and Crimes Against Humanity. Retrieved August 1, 2021, from https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/a_matter_of_comparison_web_0.pdf.

states with Holocaust education bills and official taskforces or commissions. Florida and New Jersey even include state funding allocated for these efforts. Other states with Holocaust education legislation saw the creation of volunteer-based taskforces and commissions often encouraged by their respective Departments of Education, but without a legislative act for their creation. This is the case in Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Texas. Of these states, only Colorado receives modest funding as outlined in the mandate. Lastly, some states without or with pending legislation have created taskforces to bolster Holocaust education in their states. Even as the funding and status of these taskforces and commissions differ greatly, overall, their primary function is:

- to assist school districts in including the Holocaust in their curricula,
- to train teachers, and
- to hold districts accountable in whether and how well they enforce Holocaust education legislation in their states.

New Jersey has the most comprehensive commission relative to other states with taskforces and commissions based on funding, established centers, and organization of teacher education. The commission, signed into law in 2013, is allocated \$159,000 annually, which pays the salaries of its two leaders and general operating costs. The commission's focus includes educating teachers and districts while holding them accountable to enforce the bill's charge. The commission currently has 25 members. In addition, according to the New Jersey Commission, there are also 30 resource centers throughout New Jersey dedicated to training teachers, college students, and educating the public about the Holocaust. Each of these resource centers has its own funding mostly through private donors and foundations. For their teacher training efforts, they mostly work with national organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League, Facing History and Ourselves, and others. Many are associated with local museums, universities, and colleges. This decentralized structure has many advantages in reaching different parts of the state, but it makes communication and coordination difficult.²⁶ Helen Kirschbaum works

²⁶ (New Jersey Holocaust Commission, Personal Communication, April 28, 2021).

for one of these resource centers as the Director of the Goodwin Education Center at the Esther Raab Holocaust Museum in Cherry Hill, NJ. She mentioned that there is a lack of communication between different centers and with declining funding of the commission, “*they have less to offer to the centers each year.*” This means that despite the creation of a commission and its endowment with funds, there is “*no way to hold high schools accountable*” as the commission does “*not know which districts are even teaching about the Holocaust.*”

Florida was also early to pass legislation, create an official taskforce on Holocaust education under the Commissioner of Education, and endow it with funds albeit through annual appropriation and not in perpetuity as in New Jersey.²⁷ According to Mallory McGovern, the Florida’s Program Coordinator at the Commissioner’s Task Force on Holocaust Education, there are also resource centers around the state. Their primary charge is “*to provide access to resources and professional development for Florida teachers. Some of these sites are connected to universities, but not all.*” The taskforce issues a call for applications to give funding to “*school districts, designated sites, other community organizations whose proposed activities are aligned with the mission.*”²⁸ While the taskforce’s reach and organization seem admirable, similar problems as in New Jersey also plague Florida. Barbara Goldstein, a former chair of Florida’s taskforce, mentioned in an email, “*More state outreach to educators is needed for teacher training.*” Mallory McGovern added, “*accountability and monitoring tend to fall on the school districts as far as assessing the long-term impact.*”

States with smaller taskforces and commissions and no funding are even more challenged to serve their missions. Illinois currently has a commission of 17 members, whereas Michigan has narrowed its commission from 15 members to three. Given these challenging circumstances, these states build coalitions to offer as much teacher training and follow up as possible. Michigan’s Governor’s Council on Genocide and Holocaust Education, for example, issued detailed recommendations already in 2017 on teacher training and other issues, yet this was only possible

²⁷ Solodev. (2021). Commissioner of Education’s Task force on Holocaust Education. Retrieved August 1, 2021, from <https://www.fldoe.org/holocausteducation/>.

²⁸ Commissioner’s Task Force on Holocaust Education Project Based Funding Application. (2021). Retrieved August 1, 2021, from <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/19868/urlt/fundingapholocaust.pdf>.

due to private funding.²⁹ New Hampshire too has an unfunded taskforce made up of invested volunteer parties that include the Catholic Diocese, school district Superintendents, the Anti-Defamation League, Holocaust survivors, legislators, and an affiliation with Keene State College. In the same spirit of pooling resources, the Rhode Island Holocaust and Genocide Education Coalition involves the Holocaust Center, the Armenian Genocide Project, and the Jewish Federation flanked by two universities. As Marty Cooper, a member of Rhode Island’s coalition, wrote in an email, “*the coalition, has become a clearinghouse in assisting teachers with finding/getting resources, including finding survivors of the Holocaust or other genocides to speak at schools.*” As in the case of funded taskforces in New Jersey and Florida, these efforts are having an impact. Esther Kalajian, Rhode Island co-chair of the Genocide Education Project and member of the coalition, mentioned, “*students are having a meaningful dialogue amongst themselves*” about the Holocaust. This “*would not have happened prior to the legislation*” and the coalition that sprung from it. Yet, implementation and oversight over Holocaust curriculum remain difficult in Rhode Island and everywhere else. As Marty Cooper of Rhode Island Holocaust and Genocide Coalition wrote, “*It is not possible, currently, to hold anyone accountable. The Department of Education, at this time, does not have the ability to oversee ‘curriculum requirements’ per se.*”

There is very little consistency between the different states’ taskforces or commissions, as all vary in legislative support, partnerships, numbers of members, and even meeting times. They are much more consistent in terms of what they hope to achieve—inserting Holocaust education curriculum in schools, training teachers on content and effective pedagogies around teaching the Holocaust, and holding districts accountable in enforcing the legislative mandates on Holocaust education. Even New Jersey and Florida as states with old, strong mandates embedded in state standards and funded taskforces struggle to meet these goals. Relying on their networks and using national curricula provided by the Anti-Defamation League and others, taskforces therefore focus on teacher training as the most attainable and perhaps most important goal. They clearly achieve much with little, but inconsistent funding makes it difficult to ensure that training is recurring each year and continuous for individual

²⁹ Governor’s Council on Genocide and Holocaust Education. (2017). Retrieved August 1, 2021, from https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/GCGHE-annual-report-2017--2-5_640616_7.pdf.

teachers over their careers. A comprehensive study of implementation and accountability remains elusive everywhere. As Elaine Culbertson, the Chair of the Pennsylvania Holocaust Education Council, lamented in a phone interview, “*districts would self-report (with no proof) if they were teaching the Holocaust (...) if there was one course that included one thing about the Holocaust they could say ‘yes’.*” This is indicative of the larger problem of how to effectively, and continuously, ensure that the Holocaust is being taught in schools.

FUNDING FOR TASKFORCES AND COMMISSIONS

Taskforces and commissions work hard to implement Holocaust education as mandated in their states’ bills. Yet, few legislatures are willing to fund them. Knowing this, many proponents of Holocaust education bills avoided any reference to funding just get them passed, even if that meant having to fundraise for these efforts themselves. Michael Bloom, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation Association of Connecticut, for example made, this point in a phone interview, (We) “*did that on purpose to make it easier to pass, but it means the state wasn’t giving money to create a curriculum.*”

New Jersey is a notable exception; it is one of the few states that provide funding with an annual allocation of \$159,000 in perpetuity.³⁰ Florida and Colorado also provide annual funding for Holocaust education, \$100,000³¹ and \$11,998, respectively.³² Clearly, these funds are not commensurate with what the taskforces and commissions are charged with. Individuals interviewed for this report are keenly aware that the lack of funding jeopardizes the bills’ intentions on the whole. As Amanda Coven, Director of Education at Oregon’s Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education, wrote in an email, “*Unfortunately, there are still teachers across the state that are unaware of the mandate. Without funding, there is no way to guarantee that teachers and administrators receive quality professional development that prepare them for its implementation.*”

³⁰ (New Jersey Holocaust Commission, Personal Communication, April 28, 2021).

³¹ (B. Goldstein, Personal Communication, December 7, 2020).

³² Final Fiscal Note: HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE STUDIES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS. (2020, August 27). Retrieved August 1, 2021, from https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2020A/bills/fn/2020a_hb1336_fl.pdf.

Mostly travel and meeting reimbursement and substitute teacher cost.

As a result of modest or no state funding, all taskforces and commissions rely on philanthropy from private donors and in-kind donations from museums, community groups, and higher education institutions. These contributions cannot be quantified, but literally no interview partner did not have something good to say about their partners and their contributions. Many interview partners also mention using resources from national organizations such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Anti-Defamation League, Echoes and Reflections, and Facing History and Ourselves to start or support already existing teacher training. In the absence of well-researched resources on other genocides, it will be a difficult task for taskforces and commissions to provide teachers with quality materials on these atrocities. Lastly, volunteers, many of whom are retirees, provide a large part of the labor in all of these endeavors.

ARIZONA'S EFFORTS

Arizona got a lot of things right, which resulted in the passing of its long-awaited bill in July 2021. The key to success was that the bill's proponents, notably Phoenix Holocaust Association, pursued a two-tiered approach pushing for legislation as well as building coalitions and infrastructure in support of Holocaust education. The legislative effort, led by Representative Alma Hernandez (D) as primary sponsor and with the support of House Speaker Rusty Bowers (R), succeeded as a bipartisan effort. Key individuals, such as Michael Beller, provided behind the scenes strategizing, coordinating, and lobbying for the bill. Phoenix Holocaust Association also built partnerships and infrastructure needed for Holocaust and genocide education by establishing close ties with the Arizona Department of Education. In fact, when the legislative effort was stalled in early 2020 due to delays caused by the pandemic, the drive for the mandate was kept alive by passage of Arizona Board of Education rules in October 2020. Mirroring the stalled bill's text, these rules "require students to receive instruction in the Holocaust and other genocides at least once in either grade seven or grade eight and at least once in high school in their social studies courses."³³ These rules triggered the creation of a taskforce led by Phoenix Holocaust Association bringing together

³³ Arizona Holocaust and Genocide Education Resources. (2021). Retrieved August 1, 2021, from <https://www.azed.gov/standards-practices/holocaust-and-genocide>.

teachers, administrators, and representatives from a host of institutions around the state, including from all three public universities in Arizona. The taskforce created a toolkit on the website of the Arizona Department of Education to immediately provide teachers with quality materials on the Holocaust and other genocides thus enhancing and pooling the many existing teacher training efforts in our state. This two-pronged approach created the very link between legislative efforts and state standards as expressed by the Department of Education that this report identified as vital. It also built the infrastructure that followed, but did not accompany, the legislative efforts in other states.

The bill's text is short, but relatively strong for the three reasons discussed in this report. The wording of the mandate is unambiguous, making it a requirement "that students be taught about the Holocaust and other genocides." It also specifies that such instruction needs to take place "at least twice between the seventh and twelfth grades." What is more, the bill directly references the Arizona Department of Education rules, thus embedding it in state standards and Department of Education rules. Lastly, it includes other genocides opening up the possibility to include a host of organizations representing the diversity of our state.³⁴

The bill and corresponding infrastructure are in place, but Arizona's work is far from done. As in other states, the bill deliberately evaded the issue of funding, and the taskforce relies solely on volunteer work and private donations. There is no shortage of good will in our state, but intensifying the taskforce's efforts to become a larger, coordinating body for resource centers around the state will require greater funding. To this effect, the taskforce might consider:

- creating bylaws governing, for example, the election process and potential term limits for taskforce members,
- lobbying for the allocation of funds from the state as well as acquiring more funds from private donations and grants,
- developing strategies together with the Department of Education to assess the implementation and quality of instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides in Arizona,

³⁴ AZ- HB2241. (2021). Retrieved August 1, 2021, from <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/1270214>.

- identifying existing resource centers from around our state at museums, archives, community organizations, universities, and community colleges,
- acting as a clearing house, continue to pool materials from resource centers, especially with respect to teacher training that is both online and in person,
- helping resource centers enhance and tailor existing high-quality Holocaust materials from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and other national organizations to include the stories of Arizona survivors, and
- helping resource centers to create materials to enable teachers to cover other genocides and showcase Arizona’s relation to survivors of these genocides.

CONCLUSION

Lawmakers all over the United States have introduced bills on Holocaust education. Since New Jersey and Florida passed the first bills in 1994, this trend has accelerated. Of the 21 states with legislation requiring or encouraging Holocaust education, 12 have passed such bills since 2018 with Wisconsin, Arkansas, and Arizona as the latest additions in 2021. The proliferation of these bills demonstrates concern about rising anti-Semitism, students’ lack of knowledge as well as a belief that teaching the Holocaust is a necessary foundation for fostering ethics and empathy in a democratic society. Florida’s 1994 bill already established that Holocaust education is “encouraging tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society and (...) nurturing and protecting democratic values and institutions.”³⁵ The purpose of this research is to collect data from states that have already established mandates in order to assess their process in creating and passing the mandate, reasoning behind the need to have a mandate for Holocaust education, and the effectiveness of its implementation. These shared concerns notwithstanding, Holocaust education bills vary greatly in three interlinked dimensions as studied in this report:

- strength of the bills,

³⁵ *Florida’s Holocaust Mandate*. Holocaust Resources. (2011). Retrieved November 2020, from <https://www.holocaustresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/FL-HolocaustMandate.pdf>.

- corresponding taskforces/commissions to build resource centers, and
- allocated funding (if any).

As a recap, this report relies on the wording of the bills and associated state standards. This data is complemented by phone or email interviews conducted between November 2020 and May 2021 with key stakeholders in 17 of the 21 states. Central findings of this report include:

- Effectively implemented bills include unambiguous mandates embedded in state standards and are endowed with specific instructions on when and how to teach the Holocaust in different grade levels.
- Taskforces/commissions are established to be the transmission vehicles between the transmission between the bill, states' Departments of Education, and schools. These bodies should perform three tasks.
 - (1) provide professional development that is both recurring each year and continuous for individual teachers, create resources for teachers, and hold schools accountable by conducting periodic evaluations of the bill's implementation.
 - (2) develop curricula for middle and high schools integrated in state standards and establish a set amount of time (and number of lessons) that the Holocaust and other genocides must be taught, and
 - (3) establish transparent governing rules such as term limits, appointment/election of chairperson, and diversity requirements for taskforces/commissions as well as liaise existing resources at universities, colleges, and museums.
- Even though taskforces and commissions receive substantial donations from individuals and in-kind contributions from museums, universities, and communities, they typically lack sufficient funding. Only three states attached modest funding to their bills. As a result, taskforces in their current form fall short, especially in assessing how well the bills' mandates are implemented in schools.

The political will to pass Holocaust education bills is laudable. Yet, the failure to endow the bills with funds and to empower task-forces/commissions substantially hampers these efforts. What started as a research project in order to support the passing of a mandate in Arizona has grown to demonstrate the true effectiveness of Holocaust Education Mandates in the United States. Moving forward, states should reflect on the findings in this report before creating and implementing new bills so that they can ensure that any laws that are passed will actually be effectively implemented in the classroom.

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