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We congratulate all of those New Mexicans throughout the state who stood up to protest against proposed changes to the science standards being taught in our schools. Your voices have been heard.

New Mexico Public Education Secretary Christopher Ruszkowski told The Associated Press on Thursday that the final standards would replicate Next Generation Science Standards developed by a consortium of states. The only changes will be a brief addition covering local accomplishments in science and industry.

The original PED proposal contained changes to the national standards that were clearly driven by politics and not science. References to global warming, evolution and the age of the Earth had all been stripped away.

Those proposed changes brought immediate criticism from throughout the state. Las Cruces Superintendent Greg Ewing was among many to speak out against the proposed changes, saying in a letter to the PED that they would have a “lasting detrimental impact on science education.

“These omissions dilute the accuracy of key scientific concepts that may forever impact the science literacy of students. Such a policy decision would marginalize New Mexico students and render them less able to compete with their peers across the nation and the globe,” Ewing charged.

He wasn't alone. A group of 61 scientists and engineers at Los Alamos National Lab bought a full-page ad in the Santa Fe New Mexican to express their opposition. Hundreds of people attended a public hearing on the proposed changes in Santa Fe, some waiting in line for as long as three hours to express their opposition. Not one person spoke in favor of the proposed changes.

Ruszkowski skipped that meeting. But he couldn't avoid the criticism. From every corner of the state, the cries were the same: keep politics out of our kids' science classrooms.

Lesley Galyas, former math and science bureau chief for the PED, told the Albuquerque Journal that she resigned when ordered to make the changes by Ruszkowski and former Secretary Hanna Skandera.

The PED never explained how the proposed changes came to be adopted in the original draft. Supporters of those changes never were able to offer an argument as to why they would help New Mexico students be more successful, both now and in the future.

They suggested, rather, that it should be up to each community to decide for itself which scientific facts to accept and which to discard. Students learning about the origins of the Earth would get a whole different lesson plan in more religious communities. Students attending schools in towns reliant on oil and gas production would never be bothered by facts about global climate change.

Ruszkowski only backed down under enormous public pressure.

“I told them they were wrong – that they were underestimating the STEM community and the science teachers,” Galyas warned.

At the end of the process, Ruszkowski offered only that he hoped people would remain as “fired up” about helping kids to master the standards. There was nothing to suggest that the PED understood it had made a mistake and would learn from it.

And so, it did not come as a complete surprise Thursday when Sen. Bill Soules tweeted from a legislative meeting that the PED is now making changes to remove Rosa Parks, Roe v. Wade and other uncomfortable topics from the history assessments.