

## **TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **TENNESSEE TEACHERS FILE LAWSUIT OVER UNCONSTITUTIONAL “PROHIBITED CONCEPTS” LAW**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Tennessee Education Association and five Tennessee public school educators have filed a lawsuit against the Tennessee Commissioner of Education and members of the State Board of Education challenging the constitutionality of Public Chapter No. 493, known as the prohibited concepts law. The law prohibits teaching of core subjects in Tennessee State Standards, which puts teachers in an impossible position and deprives students of a quality education.

“There is no group of individuals more passionate and committed to ensuring Tennessee students receive a high-quality education than public school educators,” said Knox County Educator and Tennessee Education Association President Tanya T. Coats. “This law interferes with Tennessee teachers’ job to provide a fact-based, well-rounded education to their students.”

The lawsuit calls into question the unconstitutionally vague language of the law and the subjective nature of its enforcement. The law interferes with instruction on difficult but important topics included in the Tennessee State Standards, which were developed and approved by Tennesseans.

Specifically, the lawsuit claims the law fails to provide Tennessee educators a reasonable opportunity to understand what conduct it prohibits; it encourages arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement; and, as a result, it is unconstitutionally vague in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

“Laws need to be clear. The prohibited concepts law conflicts with the state’s own academic standards and curriculum, which creates unfair risks to Tennessee teachers using state approved materials, following state standards, and providing fact-based instruction,” Coats said. “Educators have already spent countless hours trying to understand and navigate the law’s unclear requirements.”

The lawsuit asks the court to issue a permanent injunction against enforcement of the prohibited concepts law and declare the law unconstitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment.

“Tennessee students will fall behind their peers in other states if this law stays on the books. We are already seeing school leaders make changes to instruction and school activities due to the risk of losing state funding, facing unfair repercussions or threats to their professional standing. TEA is committed to fighting for public school educators’ right to do their job and Tennessee children’s right to a fact-based, well-rounded public education,” Coats said.

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*The Tennessee Education Association is the state’s largest professional association for public school educators, representing tens of thousands of classroom teachers, administrators, support professionals and students training to become educators. For more than 150 years, TEA has worked to strengthen and protect public education for all Tennessee students.*