



1819 NEWS

Allen Mendenhall: My year inside Alabama's textbook machine

[Allen Mendenhall](#) | 12.15.25



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Word is out: The Alabama State Board of Education has deferred any determination on which social studies textbooks (<https://whnt.com/news/alabama-state-board-of-education-holds-off-on-vote-for-social-studies-textbooks/>), would reach public school students across the state. Its vote was postponed indefinitely.

A formal consideration of recommended texts from which local schools might select was supposed to occur in November. But it vanished from the agenda before the meeting's gavel ever fell.

As a member of the State Textbook Committee, permit me to confess: this news brought relief, even satisfaction. Until now, prudence – and Alabama Code section 16-36-60, along with its statutory companions – compelled my silence.

The law is quite explicit: committee members agree “not to reveal ... except to the State Board of Education or the State Superintendent of Education ... the findings, ratings, or grading of the State Textbook Committee.”

Another provision makes it a Class C misdemeanor for any committee member (or secretary, or “any other person”) to reveal the committee’s ratings and gradings to anyone other than the Board or Superintendent before the textbook contracts are signed.

This statutory architecture arguably prohibits public revelation of the Committee’s internal deliberations, at a minimum, until the State Board ratifies the adoption list and the ink dries on contracts.

Thus, from an abundance of caution – that lawyerly virtue – I shall refrain from discussing these internal machinations, procedures or conclusions. But I will declare that the existing framework proves utterly impotent at excluding leftist ideology and indoctrination from our textbooks.

Section 16-36-60 permits darkness where sunshine ought to penetrate, concealing from the citizenry the committee’s actual operations.

Consider my story.

During the summer of 2024, I undertook an extensive review of the proposed social studies standards, later submitting my analysis of said standards and their implications for the teaching of Alabama history, U.S. history, world history, geography, and civics.

The governor’s office seemed gratified, as did numerous others who submitted standards commentary. Leaders throughout the state extended their appreciation for my contributions.

Shortly thereafter, Gov. Kay Ivey – presumably as acknowledgment of these labors – appointed me to the Social Studies division of the 2025 State Textbook Committee. I characterized this honor as an acknowledgment,

though in truth the position proved far from ceremonial, demanding considerable exertion.

The assignment neither charmed nor amused. Hours accumulated like dust settling upon a windowsill: evenings hunched over economics textbooks, stolid volumes with their graphs ascending hopefully and their theoretical frameworks tucked into footnotes like whispered confidences.

I prepared myself, naturally, as one does when accepting such responsibilities, though eventually the textbooks blurred into uniformity, each chapter dissolving into the next with its discourse on supply curves and fiscal policy.

Then commenced drives to Montgomery, with that distinctive Alabama heat wavering above the highway, the automobile's air conditioning waging futile combat, and that sensation of being drawn toward something simultaneously tedious and curiously essential: civic obligation stripped of all romantic pretense.

The Gordon Persons Building downtown, architecture that proclaimed its bureaucratic function with all the aesthetic appeal of office furniture. Within, we assembled – the committee, that peculiar congregation of educators and citizens – in a chamber that managed to be simultaneously vast and claustrophobic.

Fluorescent illumination droned its monotonous melody. Summer sunlight stretched beyond the windows, brilliant and unattainable, while we remained sequestered in that cheerless room, bound to our assignment.

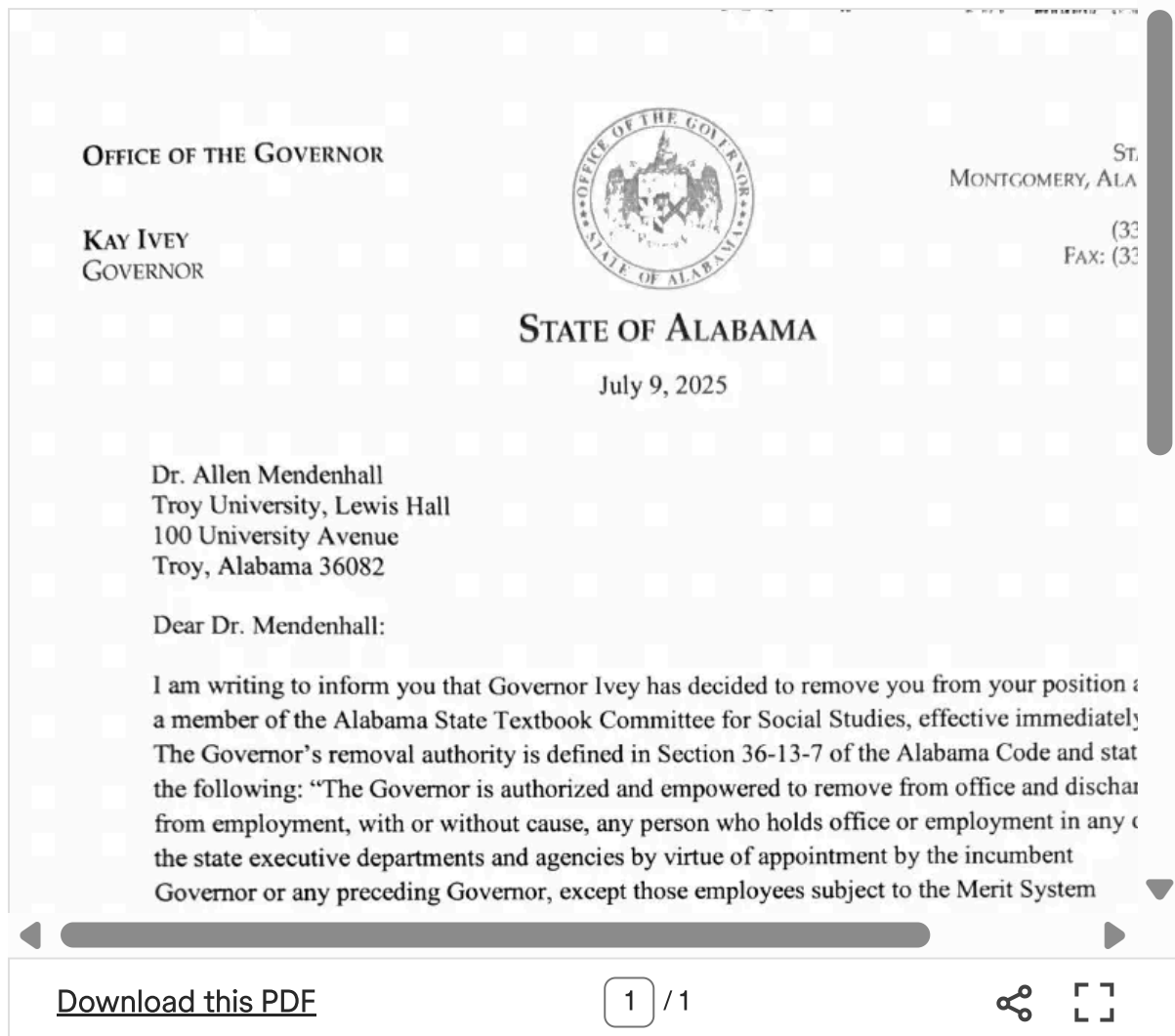
Hour upon hour we examined, we evaluated, we assessed the comparative merits of Chapter 12 against Chapter 11, and we contemplated whether this particular diagram illuminated or obfuscated, whether that explanation would resonate with a 16-year-old in Tuscaloosa or Mobile, or in some hamlet none of us could locate on a map.

The textbooks accumulated around us like fortifications constructed of paper. Yet certain moments transcended the tedium: Dr. Blake Busbin proved consistently gracious, professional and convivial. The process, however, remained laborious.

Then finally, *finally*, in June – with its intimation of liberation and its reality of one ultimate effort – I completed the process. Finished! I felt satisfied to have served our great state. I resumed ordinary existence with this obligation concluded, considerably relieved.

On July 6, I published my initial exposé (<https://1819news.com/news/item/allen-mendenhall-does-regions-financial-stand-for-alabama-values-or-undermine-them>), of Regions Financial. To my surprise, I soon received the following letter from the governor's office, written three days later, terminating my textbook committee appointment:

[SCRIBD]



[Gov Ivey Removal Letter](https://www.scribd.com/document/965058418/Gov-Ivey-Removal-Letter#from_embed) (https://www.scribd.com/document/965058418/Gov-Ivey-Removal-Letter#from_embed), by [annie.holmquist](https://www.scribd.com/user/931765077/annie-holmquist#from_embed) (https://www.scribd.com/user/931765077/annie-holmquist#from_embed).

How peculiar: the governor dismissed me only *after* I'd fulfilled my entire obligation. This removal, following so swiftly upon my Regions revelations – mere accident of the calendar, or something less innocent?

Of this much I'm certain: Legislative oversight of the textbook process has become not merely advisable but necessary. Gov. Tommy Tuberville, when his apparent time comes, will surely bring a much-needed housecleaning to such

affairs.

There are limits to what secrecy can hide.

Allen Mendenhall writes a weekly column for 1819 News, lives in Alabama, and works in Washington, D.C. A lawyer with a Ph.D. in English from Auburn University, he has taught at multiple colleges and universities across Alabama and is the author or editor of nine books. Learn more at AllenMendenhall.com (<http://AllenMendenhall.com>).

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