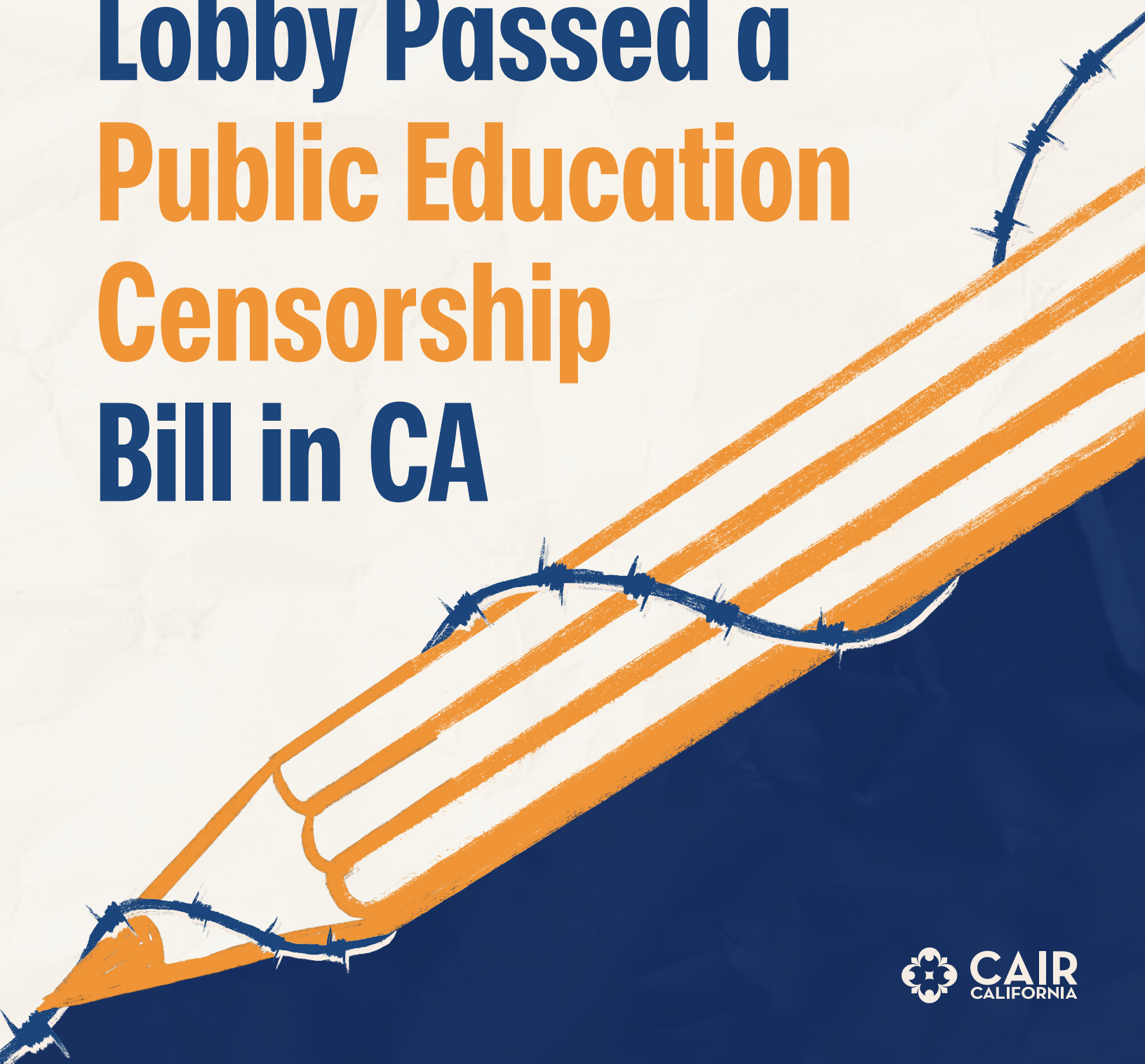
AB 715

How the Israel Lobby Passed a Public Education Censorship Bill in CA



CAIR CALIFORNIA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Report Overview & Purpose — 01

Legislative Timeline: — 03
AB 1468 and AB 715

Executive Summary — 07

The Introduction of AB 1468: — 11
Censoring Palestine from Ethnic Studies

The California Israel Lobby's History of Attacking Ethnic Studies — 12

The Key Players Behind AB 1468 — 14

- Assemblymember Rick Zbur
- Senator Scott Wiener
- Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel
- Senator Josh Becker

The Defeat of AB 1468 and the Introduction of AB 715 — 16

The Legislative Fight Against AB 715 — 18

- Issues with the Initial Text
- The Diversity Caucuses Sign On
- The Assembly Education Hearing
- The Assembly Votes to Send AB 715 to the Senate
- Extreme Zionist Amendments
- Issues with the Amended Text
- Extreme Amendments Derail the Legislative Process
- The Final Push: Grassroots Advocacy Against AB 715

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Legislative Session Concludes with AB 715 Being Rushed Through — 25

- September 10: Senate Education Hearing
- September 11: Senate Appropriations Hearing
- September 12: Assembly Education Hearing

The Senate and Assembly Floor Votes — 31

- Senate Floor Vote
- Assembly Floor Vote

Governor Newsom Signs AB 715 into Law — 34

The Path Ahead on Fighting Censorship in Public Education — 35

Addendum — 37

Appendix — 40

Report Overview & Purpose

This report documents how AB 715, the pro-Israel public education censorship law, was introduced and passed through the California state legislature in an **unprecedented and underhanded manner that bypassed normal procedure and process** and was subsequently signed into law by Governor Gavin Newsom in October 2025.

The law went into effect in January 2026 and is expected to chill speech within public classrooms as it relates to criticism of Israel and the discussion of Palestinian narratives and Arab American history. Additionally, the law is expected to directly impact teachers who will be targeted by weaponizing antisemitism via the Uniform Complaint Procedure (UCP).

The purpose of this report is to document what happened during the legislative process, who the key players were, and how legislation designed to shield the Israeli government from criticism was signed into law in California.

Key Terms

The following are key terms used within this report:

Zionism

As defined by **Jewish Voice for Peace**

A settler-colonial movement that has created an **apartheid state:** Israel. **Zionism is a form of Jewish nationalism** and is the primary ideology that drove the establishment of Israel. Zionism began in the late 19th century in the context of a set of huge changes in political, cultural, social landscape of Jewish life in Europe, along with the general rise of nationalist movements and nation-state political forms. For Jews in Europe, this meant a sharp rise in violent antisemitism.

Zionist

A supporter of **Zionism.**

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism:

"Antisemitism is a **certain perception of Jews,** which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

Legislative Timeline:

AB 1468 and AB 715

FEBRUARY 2025

AB 1468 introduced

MARCH 2025

Senator Josh Becker claims that Palestine never existed during a JPAC webinar about AB 1468

APRIL 2025

A lack of support for the bill from the legislature's diversity caucuses, as well as labor and grassroots opposition to AB 1468 force the Legislative Jewish Caucus to start devising alternate legislation.

MAY 2025

May 12: AB 1468 is pulled, and AB 715 is simultaneously introduced.

May 14: The Assembly Education Committee holds a hearing on AB 715 and unanimously votes to pass it.

May 23: AB 715 is voted through the Assembly Appropriations Committee en masse with a slew of other bills.

May 29: AB 715 is passed along to the Senate after an Assembly floor vote 68-11. Eleven Assemblymembers abstained: Alvarez, Bryan, Chen, Elhawary, Kalra, Lee, Nguyen, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Tangipa, Ward.

JULY 2025

July 1: The amended language of AB 715 is released, which includes explicit protections for criticism of Zionism and Israel, categorizing both Jewish and Israeli people together.

July 8: The extreme amendments alarm Senate leadership, forcing AB 715 to be pulled from the Senate Education Committee hearing set to occur on July 9. This kicks off a process in which Senate Pro Tempore Mike McGuire and Education committee Chair Sasha Perez take over working on the bill with input from a "broad coalition."

AUGUST 2025

August 15: The New York Times publishes an op-ed by former Biden administration appointee Lily Greenberg Call titled "California Democrats Are Fighting Trump's Battle for Him." The op-ed outlines the issues with AB 715 and makes the case that the California Democrats championing AB 715 are weaponizing antisemitism.

SEPTEMBER 2025

September 10: The Senate Education Committee holds a hearing on AB 715 and votes to pass it to Appropriations. Senator Cortese abstains from the vote.

September 11: AB 715 is voted through the Senate Appropriations Committee with a single "No'" vote (Cabaldon) and two abstentions (Wahab, Grayson).

September 12: Assembly Education Committee
(Informational Hearing - No Vote):
Chair Muratsuchi blasts the bill's authors for cutting the committee out of the legislative process after making commitments to work with them on the bill.

September 12: Senate Floor Vote
The bill passed a Senate floor vote with 35 "Yes" votes with five members abstaining from the vote: Choi, Cortese, Gonzalez, Valladares, Wahab.

SEPTEMBER 2025

September 13: The bill passed an Assembly floor vote on concurrence with 71 "Yes" votes and nine members abstaining from the vote: Arambula, Caloza, Elhawary, Garcia, Kalra, Lee, Muratsuchi, Ortega, Solache.

OCTOBER 2025

October 7: Governor Newsom signs AB 715 into law on the second anniversary of Israel's genocide in Gaza.

October 26: A report in the LA Times states that Assemblymember Zbur will see through the commitment that AB 715's authors made on clean-up language.

DECEMBER 2025

December 9: The California Coalition to Defend Public Education (CCDPE) sends a letter to AB 715's authors and the Legislative Jewish Caucus regarding honoring clean-up commitments made during the final hearings of the bill in the legislative session beginning January 5, 2026.

JANUARY 2026

January 1: AB 715 goes into effect.

January 5: The 2026 legislative year in California officially begins.

January 21: CAIR-CA, CFA, SEIU California and ACLU California Action meet with representatives from the Legislative Jewish Caucus to elevate concerns around AB 715 in an unsuccessful attempt to work through solutions.

MARCH 2026

AB 715 authors fail to uphold commitment to ***urgently*** introduce clean-up legislation to meet stakeholder concerns.

March 11: Assemblymember Robert Garcia submits amendments to introduce AB 2195 to address urgent harms caused by AB 715.

APRIL 2026

April 13: CAIR-CA mobilizes over 400 California Muslims and community partners in Sacramento, urging Assembly Speaker Rivas to accept the AB 2159 amendments and allow public debate.

APRIL 2026

April 16: Assemblymember Rick Zbur amends AB 2615 with inadequate clean-up language. Bypassing the Assembly Education Committee's letter submission deadline, this maneuver prevents concerned stakeholders from submitting official position letters for the public record.

April 20: In a continued good-faith effort to engage, CAIR-CA, the California Faculty Association, and SEIU California submit a joint ***Oppose Unless Amended*** letter on AB 2615 to signal a willingness to collaborate while highlighting the bill's shortcomings.

April 22: AB 2615 passes the Assembly Education Committee (6 Yes, 1 No, 2 Abstain) despite significant pushback from civil rights, education, and social justice advocates.

April 30: AB 2159 (Garcia) is held in the Assembly Rules Committee without being referred to a policy committee, while AB 2615 (Zbur) is allowed to advance.

MAY 2026

May 11: CAIR-CA disseminates a California Assembly floor alert highlighting its official ***Oppose*** position to AB 2615 due to the authors' unwillingness to collaborate with alarmed parties on any of the elevated concerns.

May 28: AB 2615 is referred to the Assembly Rules Committee due to stakeholder pressure around their concerns not being addressed adequately.

AUGUST 2026

August 31: AB 2615 fails to meet stakeholder concerns in order to be referred back to policy committee and ***dies*** due to its inability to meet the August 31st deadline for bills to be passed in each house. SB 998 passes through the legislature without any substantive additions to address anti-Muslim hate in a prescriptive way.

Executive Summary

AB 715: Pro-Israel Censorship in Public Education Is Codified into California Law

The passage of AB 715, a pro-Israel public education censorship bill that targets K-12 education, in 2025 marks a dark moment in the record of the California state legislature. This year ushered in the advent of fascist and authoritarian policies at the federal level to silence dissent and crush the pro-Palestinian advocacy movement to maintain unconditioned support for the foreign state of Israel at all costs. While some California legislators and executives decried the actions of the federal administration as fascist attacks on freedom of speech that undermine the first amendment of the U.S. constitution, they used their own power to codify a similar attack into state law.

The Israel Lobby's History of Attacking California's Ethnic Studies Program

The story of AB 715 begins with AB 1468, the most recent statewide attack on California's Ethnic Studies program led by the state's Israel lobby. California is a leader in Ethnic Studies and became the first state to mandate it as a high school graduation requirement. The fight for Ethnic Studies in K-12 education began in 2012 and carried on until 2021 when the California state legislature passed AB 101, which mandated the one-semester high school graduation requirement. AB 101 is contingent on state funding and currently remains unfunded.

The Jewish Public Affairs Committee (JPAC), a California-based Jewish organization that is staunchly Zionist and frequently champions pro-Israel initiatives, was the main driver behind both AB 1468 and AB 715. JPAC has been leading the attack on Ethnic Studies even before the passage of AB 101 due to how Palestine is taught about in relation to the creation of the state of Israel, and the current apartheid and now genocide that Palestinians live under at the hands of the Israeli government.

AB 1468: The Israel Lobby's Attempt to Gut California's Ethnic Studies Program

A diverse coalition formed in opposition to AB 1468, anchored by CAIR California, AROC Action, Jewish Voice for Peace, California Faculty

Association (CFA), California Teachers Association (CTA), California ACLU Action, and 30 other organizations from across the state.

Opposition from the coalition and lack of support from the legislature's diversity caucuses (Black caucus, Latino caucus, AAPI caucus) derailed and ultimately killed AB 1468. The bill was pulled on May 12 and swapped out for AB 715. The forced withdrawal of AB 1468 was a significant win in the battle against censorship in education and the attacks on Ethnic Studies in California.

AB 715: The Israel Lobby Forces AB 715 Through the Legislature

After the failure of AB 1468, the authors and Legislative Jewish Caucus engaged leadership of the diversity caucuses as they developed AB 715. Allegedly, diversity caucus leadership ultimately cut a deal with the Jewish Caucus to support AB 715 in exchange for funding the Ethnic Studies program. The casualties of this deal were Palestine and Palestinian stories in California public schools.

Leveraging the diversity caucuses and getting them on board with AB 715 early in the process was critical to circumventing the Assembly Education committee ahead of its hearing of the bill, creating pressure for committee members to approve of the bill due to the optics of appearing to go against the unified diversity caucuses.

Rules were waived and AB 715 was heard in the Assembly Education Committee hearing on May 14, 2025 and voted through unanimously despite the concerns members voiced about the intent language of the bill and supporters of the bill being outnumbered 2:1 in the hearing. The bill went on to be passed through Assembly Appropriations and the Assembly floor by the close of the month.

In early July 2025, a day before the Senate Education Committee hearing was to take place, the amended language of the bill which included Zionist ideological points to define an "Antisemitic Learning Environment" caused alarm amongst legislators in the Senate, and the bill was pulled from committee by Senate leadership.

The Senate Pro Tempore's office took over the process for crafting the bill which ended up lasting two months. Despite the opposition's persistence in trying to engage in this process, organizations opposing the bill were minimally included. The months-long attempt became an exercise of trying to get the bill's authors and Legislative

Jewish Caucus to agree to legislation that was less extreme rather than developing something collaborative to address antisemitism that took into account the concerns of the various education and civil rights stakeholders.

The final version of the bill text was published on September 9, 2025 with a hearing in the Senate Education Committee scheduled for September 10, 2025. Rule after rule was waived and the bill was fast tracked through multiple hearings in Senate Education and Senate Appropriations, bypassing the vote required in a typical process in the Assembly Education committee, before heading to votes on the Senate and Assembly floors on September 12 and 13, 2025.

AB 715 was officially voted through by the legislature on September 13, 2025, and signed into law by free speech advocate Governor Gavin Newsom on October 7, 2025, the two year anniversary of Israel's genocide in Gaza. The law goes into effect on January 1, 2026.

The Israel Lobby Succeeds in Attempting to Censor Speech in the Classroom

The fight against AB 1468 and AB 715 happened within the context of a greater attack on civil liberties and personal freedoms in the United States, most of which is anchored in dismantling the pro-Palestine movement.

The timeline of both bills directly coincided with the Trump administration's illegal abductions of pro-Palestine protestors, including Columbia student Mahmoud Khalil in Spring 2025. AB 715 was concocted and birthed as this onslaught was initially underway – while some of the same state legislators who worked on this bill decried the Trump administration's actions.

But the weight of California's Israel Lobby kept AB 715 moving forward, even despite its extreme Zionist amendments in its amended version (July 2025). Opposing organizations expressed concern with every legislator engaged about the weaponization of antisemitism in California's public schools as the Trump administration's weaponization of antisemitism played out within the University of California system in parallel. Legislators were quick to condemn this weaponization by Trump, but also quick to vote through weaponization at the K-12 level brought to them by their colleagues.

And even towards the end of the legislative process, as reports of famine and starvation in Gaza proliferated widely at the end of July and beginning of August 2025, and a coalition of

genocide scholars came to the consensus that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza in early September 2025, the majority of the California state legislature chose to vote through a seriously flawed bill that threatens silencing the very speech and instruction which helps public school students process these events and this information.

AB 715 sets a dangerous precedent for the entire country. As the Israel Lobby intensely focuses on shutting down any and all criticism of Israel, the example that has been set in California will be copied and replicated throughout state legislatures across the United States.

This Fight is Not Over: The Grassroots Fight Against Censorship in the Classroom

By the end of the 2025 legislative year, every major educational association and labor union in the state opposed AB 715, and the California Coalition to Defend Public Education (CCDPE) grassroots coalition now includes a diverse array of 110+ organizations from across the state. The 2026 legislative year began January 5, 2026 and the coalition has made pursuing clean up legislation for AB 715 a priority for 2026.

In conjunction with this robust coalition, CAIR California is currently pursuing legislative action to address the harms of AB 715 by holding the bill's authors to account on their commitments for the clean up legislation. Additionally, the organization is ready to challenge the legality of the law depending on the actual impacts once the law is implemented.

It will be critical for families of students, teachers, and other stakeholders of public schools to report incidents of censorship, discrimination, and weaponization of AB 715 – whether that results in a false accusation of antisemitism or censors Palestinian, Arab and/or Muslim students and teachers.

Tracking and reporting on these incidents will be crucial for efforts to address the consequences with the law, from both a legislative and legal perspective. Please use the CAIR hate incident form to report any issues that arise in California schools related to censorship of Palestine, criticism of Israel, and/or the weaponization of antisemitism.

The Introduction of AB 1468: Censoring Palestine from Ethnic Studies



POLITICO

Exclusive: Bill would restrict Gaza lessons

By DUSTIN GARDINER, ERIC HE and BLAKE JONES | 02/24/2025 09:00 AM EST

Members of the legislative Jewish Caucus will today unveil a bill that dives headfirst into the controversy over ethnic studies curriculum in California classrooms. | Amy Osborne/AFP via Getty Images

THE BUZZ: **CURRICULUM CLASH** — Members of the Legislature's Jewish Caucus will unveil a bill today that would prohibit ethnic studies teachers from focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or other international conflicts.

In February 2025, the California Legislative Jewish Caucus introduced AB 1468, a bill they claimed was designed to address antisemitism within the state's Ethnic Studies program.

The Caucus broke the news of the legislation as an exclusive in POLITICO California which revealed the true intent of the legislation: "EXCLUSIVE: Bill Would Restrict Gaza Lessons."

The bill was focused on developing content standards, curriculum frameworks, instructional materials and establishing compliance monitoring which would prohibit Ethnic Studies teachers from focusing on "international conflicts" in an effort to censor lessons about Israel and Palestine. AB 1468 specified that teachers should focus on the "domestic experience and stories of historically marginalized peoples in American society."

This was occurring within the context of the bill being introduced well into the second year of Israel's genocide in Gaza which was dominating the news cycle and social media and also surfacing in classroom discussion.

AB 1468, an effective attack the state's Ethnic Studies curriculum, was authored and led by the Legislative Jewish Caucus without the participation of the other ethnic caucuses within the legislature which represent the core Ethnic Studies curriculum: the Latino Caucus, the African American Caucus, the Asian and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Caucus.

Additionally, in a demonstration of support and force, 25 percent of the legislature – a total of 31 lawmakers – were listed as Principal Co-Authors or Authors of AB 1468. This solidarity was meant to convey that this legislation was a priority for the 2025 legislative year and that it must pass.

The California Israel Lobby's History of Attacking Ethnic Studies

The backstory of AB 1468 is that attacks on Ethnic Studies led by pro-Israel groups have been underway for most of the last decade due to the issue of Palestine and how it is taught in relation to the creation of the nation state of Israel, and the current apartheid and now genocide that Palestinians live under at the hands of the Israeli government.

California is a leader on Ethnic Studies and is the first state to mandate it as a high school graduation requirement (starting in the 2029-2030 academic year). The fight for Ethnic Studies has been going on for a long time; for over 50 years since the 1970's when electives for the coursework first became available. The movement to secure a mandatory high school graduation requirement in California began in 2012, after the fight in Arizona for Mexican American studies, and carried on until 2021 when the California state legislature finally passed AB 101 which mandated the one semester high school graduation requirement. AB 101 is contingent on state funding and currently remains unfunded.

The main organization behind AB 1468 was JPAC, the Jewish Public Affairs Committee, a California-based Jewish organization which is staunchly Zionist and frequently champions pro-Israel initiatives. JPAC, now rebranded as Jewish California, positions itself as a representative of various community-based Jewish organizations, aligning with many marginalized communities on domestic socio economic issues. However, when it comes to foreign policy and standing in solidarity with Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AMEMSA) communities, **JPAC conflates support of Palestinian freedom and liberation and criticism of Israel with antisemitism.**

JPAC played an active role in attempting to block Ethnic Studies from being adopted as a graduation requirement for California public school students. Once the organization failed at blocking it, JPAC lobbied for the removal of the Arab American section due to its inclusion of Palestine, Palestinians, and Palestinian Americans as topics for study within Ethnic Studies – a section which was originally meant to be part of the core Ethnic Studies curriculum.



The model Ethnic Studies curriculum was adopted by the California State Board of Education in 2021, and has been a target of criticism from Zionists and Israel Lobby organizations since before its adoption. Due to intense lobbying, the model Ethnic Studies curriculum was adopted by current State Superintendent of Instruction Tony Thurmond without being inclusive of diverse voices, despite numerous attempts from diverse partners to engage his office. As a result, the model Ethnic Studies curriculum does not adequately represent the Palestinian narrative.

And the urgency of these attacks increased after Israel's genocide in Gaza began in October 2023, and accusations of antisemitism in both K-12 schools and college campuses rapidly increased as pro-Palestinian protests and encampments mobilized in response to Israel's genocide.

In fact, JPAC and the Legislative Jewish Caucus attempted to introduce and pass a bill, AB 2918, attacking Ethnic Studies in the previous legislative session (2024), but that attempt ultimately failed to gain the support of the ethnic caucuses and failed. AB 1468 was JPAC and the Jewish Caucus' attempt to revive this failed effort, and they took on Ethnic Studies without the inclusion of the diversity caucuses who were closest to the core subject matter.

The Key Players Behind AB 1468

The Principal Co-Authors of AB 1468 were Assemblymembers Rick Zbur, Dawn Addis, Jesse Gabriel, Senators Scott Wiener and Josh Becker. The majority of these legislators have problematic records on Israel and Palestine:

Assemblymember Rick Zbur:

Ahead of President Trump's targeting of pro-Palestine activists on college campuses in 2025, Assemblymember Zbur set a precedent which provided the foundation for the Trump administration to use and scale by leading on demonizing pro-Palestine protestors at UCLA in April 2024.

Zbur accused UCLA protestors of "praising Hamas leadership" and smeared pro-Palestinian advocacy as antisemitism.

On April 30, 2024, after a Zionist mob attacked the UCLA encampment, which was extensively documented in the media and on social media, Zbur issued a statement condemning violence which did not identify the mob as Zionist and only noted the assault of a single Jewish student even though 25 members of the encampment were hospitalized that night.

Victims of that 2024 Zionist mob attack are now suing UCLA, and the Trump administration is now attempting to withhold $1 billion in federal funding from UCLA over weaponized claims of antisemitism.

Senator Scott Wiener:

Senator Wiener has smeared pro-Palestinian advocacy as "endorsing Hamas" and calling for the "elimination of Israel;" attempted to undermine the Ethnic Studies program by weaponizing antisemitism (both prior to AB 1468 and in San Francisco during summer 2025); and abused his power and influence against people critical of Israel and Zionism, including Sonoma State President Mike Lee who lost his job as a result of a pressure campaign after agreeing to student demands to divest from Israel, and UCSF professor Rupa Marya who is currently suing UCSF for wrongful termination.

Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel:

Assemblymember Gabriel has stated that cutting ties with Hillel is antisemitic, and participated in the pressure campaign that resulted in the removal of Mike Lee from Sonoma State over agreeing to consider divestment demands from students.

Senator Josh Becker:

Senator Becker claimed that Palestine never existed on a JPAC webinar about AB 1468 in March 2025. This false claim drew so much backlash that JPAC took down the original recording of the webinar from their YouTube channel, and later posted an edited video without Senator Becker's offensive remarks.

Senator Becker never apologized for the remarks and was effectively removed as a public facing advocate of AB 1468.

Additionally, many of these legislators have publicly conflated criticizing the political ideology of Zionism and the state of Israel with antisemitism (examples: Zbur, Wiener, Gabriel).

As Co-Chairs of the Legislative Jewish Caucus, Senator Wiener and Assemblymember Gabriel jointly issued a series of problematic statements over the last two years since Israel's genocide in Gaza began, including:

- After the Zionist mob attack at UCLA which failed to mention the Zionist mob committing the violence;
- Labeling pro-Palestine protestors as "anti-Israel" and demonizing Palestinian liberations chants such as "from the River to the Sea" as calling for "the eradication of the state of Israel;"
- Laying the groundwork to weaponize antisemitism at California's colleges and universities in 2023 and 2024 (example 1, example 2, example 3) which directly contributed to the adoption and escalation by the Trump administration escalated in 2025 which has resulted in illegally arresting pro-Palestinian advocates and attempting to cancel visas of international students for Palestinian advocacy on the basis of weaponized antisemitism.

The Defeat of AB 1468 and the Introduction of AB 715

A diverse coalition formed in opposition to AB 1468, anchored by CAIR California, AROC Action, Jewish Voice for Peace, California Faculty Association (CFA), California Teachers Association (CTA) and California ACLU Action. By May 2025, more than 30 organizations had joined the coalition in opposition of the bill.

The first legislative milestone for AB 1468 was supposed to be an Assembly Education Committee hearing on May 14, 2025, but the opposition of the coalition and weight of CTA, specifically, and lack of support from the legislature's diversity caucuses derailed the bill.

The bill was officially pulled on Monday, May 12, 2025, and AB 715, an otherwise inactive bill, was used as a new vehicle to circumvent AB 1468 not making it through the Assembly Education Committee – giving the bill's authors a second chance at passing their effort to censor K-12 education during the 2025 legislative year.

This was problematic for a number of reasons.

First, CAIR California's Advocacy Day in Sacramento was underway in Sacramento on May 12, 2025 when word was received that AB 1468 was no longer relevant and a new bill had been introduced. Countless hours had gone into preparing for the day, including researching and developing materials for the bills the organization was advocating for and against. Constituents had traveled into Sacramento from across the state, and suddenly, the organization was informed in our legislative meetings that AB 1468 was no longer relevant, and a new bill was being introduced that we knew nothing about.

Although the bill had been pulled that day, which complicated CAIR California's plans, the issue of censorship of Palestine and Palestinian narratives in public education remained a relevant subject of concern, and constituents attending the Advocacy day used their right to speak to their legislators on this issue.

The manner in which CAIR's Advocacy day was impacted by the politics of the legislature highlights a core issue with how elected officials treat and engage with California's Muslim community: the narratives of Muslims and Palestinians are reduced to momentary incidents and symptoms – a specific bill, case, or incident –

rather than dealing with structural issues or root causes. If political dynamics are not in favor of the Muslim community, elected officials try to avoid relevant issues at all costs instead of meaningfully engaging with the Muslim community to address systemic issues.

As a result of the intense political pressure from JPAC and Legislative Jewish Caucus members, the first of many rule waivers and adoption of special procedures and process were used to ensure AB 715 was scheduled to be heard at the May 14, 2025 Assembly Education Committee hearing that was originally scheduled for AB 1468.

The abrupt change in bills and the short timeline also shortchanged Californians and education advocates on their opportunity to assess and engage legislators in the legislative process before the bill was reviewed in committee. The text of the new bill was released Monday, May 12, 2025, without any engagement or inclusion of opposition from civil rights and education communities. This gave the grassroots coalition of organizations and advocates that opposed AB 1468 only a couple of days to review and analyze the bill before the May 14, 2025 hearing.

As a result of the shortened timeline, organizations opposing the new bill, AB 715, were not able to submit official letters of opposition through the legislature's online portal due to the legislature's own rules - none of which were waived for the opposition; they were only waived in support of the Legislative Jewish Caucus and JPAC's legislative priorities.

Those who closely followed AB 715's legislative process are aware of the process-based reasons why opposition was unable to be registered with the bill, however, the optics of the situation to outside observers who did not follow what happened would appear to be that there was no official opposition because no opposition letters were submitted; a misleading conclusion.

However, the forced withdrawal of AB 1468 was a significant win in the battle against censorship in education and the attacks on Ethnic Studies in California. An Israeli Lobby priority which began with a quarter of the state legislature signing onto it, was officially dead.

The Legislative Fight Against AB 715

Issues with the Initial Text of AB 715

The text of the bill introduced on May 12, was vague and had a number of problem areas, including:

- Failing to define antisemitism which left open the possibility that problematic definitions of antisemitism, such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition which includes criticism of Israel, could be applied when evaluating alleged antisemitism in California public schools.

  > Issues with the IHRA definition include that it defines antisemitism so broadly that it could be interpreted to include criticism of Israel or support for Palestinian rights — speech protected under the First Amendment. The IHRA definition of antisemitism is unconstitutional and should not be codified in statute.
  >
  > Per ACLU California Action, a judge in a 2025 court case (Students for Justice in Palestine v. Abbot) found that "the incorporation of [the IHRA definition of antisemitism] is viewpoint discrimination" because it makes the utterance of a specific viewpoint or certain content punishable.

- Changing the definition of 'nationality' to include "residency in a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious identity" which could be applied to a number of countries with a supremacist and ethnonationalist identity, including Israel, India, and even the United States.
- Creating the role of 'Antisemitism Coordinator,' a role that did not exist nor was prescribed for any other identity group in the bill - including but not limited to California's Black, Latino, Asian, Indigenous, Arab, Muslim, or LGBTQ+ populations.
- Employing a mechanism for right-wing style book bans. It prohibited "textbook, instructional material, supplemental instructional material, or

curriculum for classroom instruction if the use of the textbook, instructional material, supplemental instructional material, or curriculum" that a student may find discriminatory.

- Targeting teachers and school board members. The bill's language included "strengthen the Uniform Complaint Process (UCP)" which directly impacts teachers, and expanded targets to include school board members who make decisions regarding programs including Ethnic Studies. Since the Israel Lobby has not been able to block Ethnic Studies at the legislative level, Zionist institutions, organizations and individuals have been targeting individual school districts throughout California which includes school administrators, Superintendents, and school board members as key stakeholders and decision makers.

Additionally, the initial text of the bill included throwaway references to Islamophobia even though no credible Muslim organization in California had been consulted on the bill or was supportive of it. This lack of engagement effectively tokenized the Muslim community while actively working against its interests.

The analysis of this version of the bill by the Assembly Education Committee consultant noted that nearly everything outlined in the bill was already covered by existing state law effectively rendering the bill redundant as the state faced a massive budget deficit.

The Diversity Caucuses Sign Onto AB 715

After the failure of AB 1468, the authors and Legislative Jewish Caucus engaged leadership of the diversity caucuses as they developed AB 715. In the weeks before the bill's introduction, meetings were held between the authors of the bill, the Legislative Jewish Caucus, and leadership of the Black, Latino and AAPI caucuses to find a path forward for the priorities of the Jewish Caucus, and for funding the state's Ethnic Studies program.

Multiple legislators' offices shared that the leadership of the diversity caucuses had made a deal with the Jewish Caucus to sign onto AB 715 in exchange for funding the Ethnic Studies program. The casualties of this deal were Palestine and Palestinian stories in California public schools. As a result, chairs from the Black Caucus (Asm. Akilah Weber Pierson), Latino Caucus (Senator Lena Gonzales), and Asian American

& Pacific Islander Caucus (AAPI) (Asm. Mike Fong) signed on as Principal Co-Authors of AB 715 after firmly opposing AB 1468.

Leveraging the diversity caucuses and getting them on board with AB 715 early in the process was critical to circumventing the Assembly Education committee ahead of its hearing of the bill, creating pressure for committee members to approve of the bill due to the optics of appearing to go against the unified diversity caucuses.

In the months to come, Al Muratsuchi, the Chair of the Assembly Education Committee, would go on record indicating that Ethnic Studies funding was a bargaining chip used by the Jewish Caucus in exchange for support of AB 715: "We want to move the ethnic studies high school graduation requirement forward, but that is contingent on appropriation and it just so happens that the two co-chairs of the Jewish Caucus are both chairs of the budget committees of both houses, the Senate and Assembly. And so we are dealing with complicated politics on several levels."

The Assembly Education Hearing for AB 715

The hearing occurred on Wednesday, March 14, 2025 and both supporters and opponents of AB 715 mobilized for it, resulting in a packed hearing room.

AB 715 was pitched by its authors, Zbur and Addis, as a "civil rights and social justice bill" that was misrepresented by the bill's opponents. During the authors' testimony, both hinted at antisemitism from the opposition: Zbur questioned the motivations of the people opposed to the bill, and Addis claimed the bill's opponents were using "tropes." Both authors failed to acknowledge that most of the opponents present in the hearing room that day were non- and anti-Zionist Jews.

David Bocarsly, Executive Director of the Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California (JPAC), the main sponsor of the bill, cited stats from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a contested source which has been deemed to be so problematic that Wikipedia now labels the organization as an "unreliable" source on the topic of Israel and Palestine.

The California's Teacher Association (CTA) spoke to the organization's concerns about AB 715, going as far to say that CTA is likely to oppose the bill if their concerns are not addressed. CTA's concerns included young people being

targeted while they are figuring out their political views, the bill creating confusion and scapegoating teachers, and limiting critical thinking and open dialogue.

A representative from the ACLU spoke to the organization's concerns that 715 would impact freedom of speech.

For public comment, opponents of the bill outnumbered supporters 2:1.

Chair Al Muratsuchi abruptly cut off the mic for commenters who elaborated on their "oppose" position after long statements from commentators on the "support" side had been given. Muratsuchi went as far as to say

> **"you object, we got the point."**

Many in attendance felt the Assembly Education Committee hearing was a "sham," and that all nine committee members knew they would be supporting the bill when they entered the room that day, despite the significant turnout speaking in opposition of the bill.

However, the committee did concede the bill was "incomplete," had "a lot of shortcomings," and needed a concrete definition for what constitutes antisemitism. Both Zbur and Bocarsly were at a loss and did not respond definitively when asked to define 'antisemitism.'

Assemblymember Bonta stated the need to define antisemitism before the bill returned to the Assembly Education Committee for a final vote before the legislative session ended. In September, in the final days of the legislative session, Bonta would revisit this commitment made by the bill's authors which was not honored and state

> **"we were robbed"**

when special procedures were once again exploited to prevent the Assembly Education Committee from voting on the bill before it went to the Assembly floor for a final vote.

The Assembly Votes to Send AB 715 to the Senate

On May 23, AB 715 was passed through the Assembly Appropriations committee en masse with a slew of other bills. It next went to the Assembly floor for a vote on May 29, and received 'Yes' votes from 68 legislators, a majority of the Assembly. 11 legislators abstained from the vote: Assemblymembers Alvarez, Bryan, Chen, Elhawary, Kalra, Lee, Nguyen, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Tangipa and Ward.

Extreme Zionist Amendments to AB 715

As the initial language of the bill released in May was vague and intent-based, the amended language released on July 1, 2025 of the bill was more expansive.

The language was highly ideologically Zionist and stripped away all of the claims made by both Zbur and Addis in the Assembly Education Committee hearing in May about the bill a “civil rights” and “social justice” bill or the bill being “misrepresented” by its opposition.

The amended language made it clear that the bill’s intent and purpose was to protect both the political ideology of Zionism and the genocidal government and leaders of Israel. This version of the bill text conflated Judaism with support for the state of Israel, totally negating the fact that many Jews do not identify with or support Israel.

Issues with the Amended Text of AB 715

The Zionist ideological narrative about Israel is the only perspective allowed within California public education on related issues, including Palestine, Arab American history and the U.S. Jewish diaspora:

- Section 1 of the bill was not limited to Jewish people, but noted "*(Jew)ish and Israelis*" as a single group four times.
- Article 6.5 'Antisemitic Learning Environment' included the following in 239(b)(1): “*Course instruction and materials regarding the Jewish community, Israel, Zionism, or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict do not adhere to the requirements of Section 60050, do not use accurate, balanced, and objective language and content, do not distinguish between opinion and fact, or do not respect the historical, cultural, or religious significance of Israel to the Jewish people.*”
- Article 6.5 239(8): “*Slurs, symbols, or derogatory expressions targeting Jewish individuals, including references to Jewish people by proxy or denigration of people who believe Zionism is inherent to Jewish identity*.”
- Article 6.5 239(9): “*Language or images directly or indirectly denying the right of Israel to exist.*”
- 60049. (3) “*Do not introduce or promote antisemitic content, including inaccurate historical narratives such as labeling Israel a settler colonial state*.”

Whereas antisemitism was not defined in the initial language of the bill, this amended version cobbled together a definition that represented the IHRA definition of antisemitism without explicitly adopting it. As noted earlier in this report, the IHRA definition is widely considered problematic and has been rejected by over 100 international bodies and civil society organizations, including Israeli groups. In addition, the author of the IHRA definition, Kenneth Stern, has spoken out against adopting speech codes like AB 715.

Additionally, this version of the bill attempted to amend section 244 of the Education Code with the book ban language, and also expanded the reach into professional development materials for teachers.

Extreme Amendments Derail AB 715's Legislative Process

On July 8, 2025, a day before the Senate Education Committee hearing for the bill was supposed to take place, the bill was pulled from committee by Senate leadership and the hearing was cancelled. The reason: the bill did not have the votes to pass committee due to the alarm the extreme amendments caused amongst legislators in the Senate.

As noted in ACLU California Action's opposition letter, the amended version of the bill included provisions that were overly broad and unconstitutional that threatened to "censor student speech; increase litigation against inclusive curriculum and teaching; and create a chilling effect on educators and students engaged in constitutionally protected expression."

This setback for the bill was a key milestone for the coalition opposing the bill which numbered 70+ organizations at the time and included the California Teachers Association (CTA) and California ACLU Action. Across the coalition organizations, thousands of constituent communications – emails, phone calls and meetings – were made in the weeks leading up to this point.

A day before the bill was pulled from committee, JPAC issued a statement condemning CTA and urging the bill's passage. This moment was a key setback in the legislative process for JPAC and the rest of the California Israel Lobby as it represented their second loss this legislative session after the death of AB 1468, their attack on Ethnic Studies.

At this point, the path forward on the bill moved from the Legislative Jewish

Caucus to the Senate Pro Tempore's, Mike McGuire, office. Senators McGuire, Wiener, and Perez and Assemblymembers Zbur and Gabriel issued a joint statement via social media on July 8 indicating that a "broad coalition" would be assembled to work on the bill over the summer in order to send a bill to the Governor at the end of the legislative session.

The Final Push: Grassroots Advocacy Against AB 715

Over the next two months, CAIR California and the California Coalition to Defend Public Education (CCDPE) met with key legislators in the process, including Senators McGuire and Perez in addition to members of both the Senate and Assembly Education committees; rallied in Sacramento; and focused on outreach to expand the coalition.

By August, CCDPE had expanded to more than 100 organizations and experienced some milestone moments.

On August 15, The New York Times published an op-ed by former Biden administration appointee Lily Greenberg Call, the only Jewish person to publicly resign from the administration over its participation in Israel's genocide in Gaza, titled 'California Democrats Are Fighting Trump's Battle for Him.' The op-ed outlined the issues with AB 715 and made the case that the California Democrats championing AB 715 were weaponizing antisemitism in the same manner the Trump administration and Republican Governors Greg Abbot (Texas) and Ron DeSantis (Florida) were at the federal level and in their respective states. Assemblymembers Rick Zbur, Jesse Gabriel and Senator Scott Wiener were named in the op-ed for being vocal opponents to Trump over his attacks on free speech while simultaneously championing AB 715 to censor criticism of Israel and free speech in California's classrooms.



OPINION
GUEST ESSAY

California Democrats Are Fighting Trump's Battle for Him

Aug. 15, 2025

On August 19, the coalition mobilized more than 70 people to Sacramento to rally against AB 715, and visit all 120 legislators' offices to advocate for opposing the bill.

The Legislative Session Concludes with AB 715 Being Rushed Through



Two months after the bill was pulled from the Senate Education Committee and with only a few days left in the legislative session, the final version of the bill text was published on September 9, 2025 with a hearing in the Senate Education Committee scheduled for the following day: September 10, 2025.

Despite the coalition's persistence in trying to support and engage in the Senate Pro Tempore's process, coalition organizations were minimally included as the Pro Tem's office played the role of negotiator on the bill. The months-long attempt became an exercise of trying to get the bill's authors and Legislative Jewish Caucus to agree to legislation that was less extreme rather than developing something collaborative to address antisemitism that took into account the concerns of the various education and civil rights stakeholders.

In addition, a companion bill, SB 48 - authored by Latino Caucus chair Senator Lena Gonzalez, was amended to create roles for additional coordinators: a Religious Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, a Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, Gender Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, and a LGBTQ Discrimination Prevention Coordinator.

Once again, extraordinary exceptions and special waivers were employed to introduce the final text of the bill at the last minute, and schedule committee hearings for it to survive the legislative session.

These measures were exceptional because the California legislature operates in two year sessions, and the 2025 legislative year was the first year in a two year session, meaning that AB 715 could have been held for the 2026 legislative year to allow for adequate time to work on its issues and pass it in the following legislative year. However, the Legislative Jewish Caucus was determined to pass the bill in the 2025 legislative year, and that created urgency for the rest of the legislature to prioritize speed rather than addressing the glaring issues with the bill.

As for the urgency, public opinion in the U.S. has changed dramatically on the subject of U.S. support for Israel due to it's genocide in Gaza over the last two years. As a result, Israel's popularity within the U.S is at an all-time low. And the change in perception will only likely continue to deteriorate, meaning legislative efforts censoring criticism of Israel will be harder battles to fight as time goes on.

By this point in the legislative process, every major educational association and labor union in the state opposed AB 715, and the CCDPE grassroots coalition had expanded to 110+ organizations.

Issues with the Final Text of AB 715

- Retained the risk of adopting the problematic IHRA definition of antisemitism by noting the Biden administration's *U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism* "as a basis to inform schools on how to identify, respond to, prevent, and counter antisemitism." This strategy includes the controversial IHRA definition which was originally adopted by the Trump administration in 2019.

  > As noted in a letter from ACLU California Action, the IHRA definition of antisemitism is unconstitutional and likely violates the First Amendment (Students for Justice in Palestine v. Abbot).
  >
  > Adopting the IHRA definition of antisemitism will open up California school districts and teachers to accusations of being antisemitic simply for including educational material or allowing classroom discussion that is deemed critical of Israeli governmental policy or actions. Kenneth Stern, author of the IHRA definition of antisemitism, opposed how the definition was being implemented and opposed its use in the bill.

Relying on the 2023 Biden Strategy will create a chilling effect on public education in California and students engaged in constitutionally protected speech, and increase litigation against public school districts concerning discriminatory enforcement of the new provisions in the bill.

- Established the position of Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator, a role that will be politicized, as the only religious group to have a dedicated coordinator, while a companion bill, SB 48 - Educational equity: discrimination prevention coordinators (Gonzalez, Pierson, Fong and Ward) declared the intent to establish an Office of Civil Rights.
- The inclusion of instruction being limited to "factually accurate" information. This phrase opens the door to questions on whether fiction may be taught or discussed in the classroom, and this clause has the potential to prevent teachers from asking students to evaluate or discuss and explore current or past events from multiple perspectives.
- Education Code section 244 already imposes a duty on LEAs to adopt or approve only those instructional materials that would not subject a student to unlawful discrimination pursuant to Education Code section 220, which includes discrimination based on one's religion, nationality, and race or ethnicity.

September 10: Senate Education Hearing

The hearing occurred on Wednesday, September 10, 2025 and both supporters and opponents of AB 715 mobilized for it. Once again, opponents of the bill outnumbered supporters 2:1. Lily Greenberg Call, the Jewish Biden administration resignee who authored The New York Times op-ed opposing AB 715, attended the hearing and submitted public comment in opposition to the bill.

The witnesses in support of the bill included a student who testified to his experience of an antisemitic incident that happened in this school, and a rabbi from Oakland who claimed that antisemitism is making students leave public schools.

The witnesses opposed to the bill included a Jewish teacher from Oakland who had himself been accused of antisemitism via the state's Uniform Complaint Procedure (UCP) who testified that AB 715 actually made Jewish students less safe, and a representative from the California Teachers Association (CTA) who

noted the unintended consequences of the bill, how it would allow for the law to be weaponized against teachers and school districts, and how it was inherently political in nature.

The bill's authors, Assemblymembers Zbur and Addis, were present and were questioned by committee members on why they were only seeing the bill two days before the legislative session was set to conclude, how the inclusion of the "factually accurate" language would create a lot of problems, and how the coordinator role requiring confirmation via the Senate was "wholly inappropriate." Multiple members of the committee, including Chair Pérez, attempted to secure the commitment of the authors that they would work on "clean up" language to address the issues with the bill in the next legislative session.

Assemblymember Addis claimed that the process AB 715 had taken was "not an atypical process," and both Zbur and Addis committed to working on clean up language in the next session.

Even though the witnesses present during the hearing had both noted the flaws with the legislation and the teacher was someone who could directly attest to how the UCP procedure can be weaponized against teachers and the experience of that, he was explicitly ignored by the members of the committee. Despite voicing concerns about the potential ramifications of the bill and the reality that teachers would be the most likely targets of weaponization, none of the committee members directed a single question to the witness who was a public school teacher.



Throughout the hearing and up until the final vote, nearly every single member of the Legislative Jewish Caucus made their presence known to the committee members by sitting in the front row of the hearing room. This tactic is employed by legislators to create pressure for committee members to vote to pass their bills.

Finally, when it came to the final vote, the political pressure of pushing AB 715 through instead of turning it into a two year bill, as any other bill would have been, won out. While nearly every member of the committee made comments that were critical of the bill, the members voted 6-0 to pass the bill out of committee with Senator Cortese abstaining from the vote.

September 11: Senate Appropriations Hearing

The following day, the bill was heard in the Senate Appropriations committee which considers state fiscal impacts of legislation.

During the hearing, Senator Wahab asked about the authors' commitment to clean up language for the bill in the 2026 legislative year, stating that she was "very grateful to the Legislative Jewish Caucus committing to more work on this bill as we move forward next year." And Assemblymember Zbur committed to continue working with "education stakeholders" and the "education committee" on clean up language for the bill.

Other concerns noted from a fiscal perspective included the potential of having to replace textbooks at a large scale, out of cycle, with Zbur noting that "materials that actually may be problematic and biased need to be removed quickly," and Addis minimizing the scope of the impact of this by claiming it would only affect handouts and less costly materials.

Senator Cabaldon restated his concern about "factually accurate language" which he had originally shared in the Senate Education Committee hearing the day before, when he voted to advance the bill, in addition to expressing concern that AB 715 has no fiscal cap which could result "in an unlimited appropriation for this bill with no limit."

The bill secured four votes to pass out of committee. Both Senators Wahab and Grayson abstained while Senator Cabaldon was the only member to vote '*No*'.

September 12: Assembly Education Hearing

Despite the authors' clear commitment to the Assembly Education Committee to work with all opponents to the bill, that did not happen. The hearing that took place on September 12, 2025 was an informational hearing; there was no vote. This hearing took place while the bill was still in the Senate, after the Senate Pro Tempore's office waived another rule to fast track the vote on the bill and bypass the Assembly Education Committee vote. However, due to the fact there were so many issues with the bill, the committee scheduled this hearing to voice their concerns.

Chair Muratsuchi pointed out that the authors had not made a good faith effort to communicate with the Assembly Education Committee, as promised in May 2025. He and the other members of the committee spoke about how they were cut out of the legislative process and did not have the ability to adequately review the bill's current language. Muratsuchi stated that AB 715 needed to be a two-year bill, rather than be rushed through as problematic and incomplete.

Assemblymember Mia Bonta stated:

> **"I've been robbed. We've been robbed of the opportunity to demonstrate that people can trust us in this process."**

The response from the authors and other members of the Legislative Jewish Caucus was to respond with emotion which appeared to be an attempt to lower the intensity of the questioning about the process of the bill, and why committee members did not have a chance to weigh in on the substance of it, as originally promised.

Assemblymember Lowenthal, a member of the committee who is also a member of the Jewish Caucus, accused Assemblymember Bonta of "all lives matter"-ing concerns of antisemitism in public schools – insinuating that the issue of antisemitism in public schools was being overlooked and ignored.

Both of the authors, Assemblymembers Addis and Zbur, were reduced to tears at different points of the informational hearing as they faced criticism and questions regarding why the Assembly Education Committee hearing had been cut out of the legislative process and why the process had been so rushed and flawed.

Both Chair Muratsuchi and Assemblymember Bonta indicated that they would not be voting for AB 715 during the Assembly floor vote.

The Senate and Assembly Floor Votes

Senate Floor Vote

During the Senate floor vote, Senator Scott Wiener, a Principal Co-Author of AB 715, introduced the bill during the vote, claiming that there was a "significant amount of misunderstanding and at times misinformation about this bill." Senator Wiener also specified that the bill had been amended to include a $2 million budget cap which had arisen as an issue in the Senate Appropriations meeting the day before.

A number of Senators made remarks on the record ahead of the final vote in the chamber. Multiple Senators, including those who had signed on as co-authors of the bill, stated the bill was "not perfect" and that clean up legislation would be needed with urgency in 2026.

Select comments from the Senate floor vote:

> **"This bill does not prevent students from learning about Palestine, Palestinians, or the ongoing decimation of Gaza. This bill does not ban teaching about Palestine, about the founding of Israel, about the conflict in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza. It does not ban criticism of Israel or any other government on the planet. I would be the last one to try to ban criticism of Israel as someone who, I love Israel, the home of half of all Jews on the planet. And, like many Israelis, I intensely criticize the government of Israel."**
>
> – Senator Scott Wiener

> **"SB 715 is the right step forward, flawed as though it may be, with the commitments of both the letter to the journal on SB 105 and the commitments by the authors and the Jewish caucus to deliver a real follow-up cleanup bill next year, I urge and AYE vote."**
>
> – Senator Christopher Cabaldon

> **"In fact, this week, we have had a disproportionate number of emails, and it's running eight to one against the bill."**
>
> – Senator John Laird

> **"I don't think it's going to work. I think it's going to create radical disruption, not good disruption, not good trouble**--radical disruption that results in thousands

of claims...[ ] **We do a lot of imperfect legislation here and we roll it out for a test drive. This is not an area where we should be rolling something out for a test drive to see what happens."**

– Senator Dave Cortese

"Now, part of the reason why there is so much misinformation around this legislation is, to be quite frank, partially our fault. Because this legislation came out incredibly late and has only been in print for the last several days."

– Senator Sasha Pérez

Final vote (Friday, September 12):

Yes **(35)**

Abstentions **(5)**: Choi*, Cortese, Gonzalez, Valladares, Wahab



*Senator Choi voted for AB 715 in the Senate Education committee, a key vote that was make or break for the bill. However, when he had the opportunity to vote for it on the floor, he ultimately abstained.

Assembly Floor Vote

In the Assembly, the bill was introduced for a concurrence vote by its authors, Assemblymembers Rick Zbur and Dawn Addis. They repeated the statements they had shared in the committee hearings over the previous few days.

Within the Assembly, the bill was described as "imperfect" by multiple Assemblymembers who stated their concerns about some of the most problematic elements of the bill and then proceeded to vote for it.

Select comments from the Assembly floor vote:

"As chair of the Education Committee, I can tell all of you that it is extremely rare when all of the education advocacy, the statewide education advocacy organizations in the state of California rise together in opposition to a bill. These organizations include the Association of California School Administrators, representing our superintendents and our principals, the California County Superintendents, the California School Boards Association, the California Federation of Teachers, the California Faculty Association, and of course, the California Teachers Association. All of these groups have taken

the position of opposition to this measure, and they all, if you look at their opposition letters, they all talk about a common theme."

– Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi

"And I wonder, in this framework, this bill, how does a teacher going forward talk about the Russian invasion of Ukraine? How do they talk about... the racist kidnappings and ICE deportations that are happening on our streets, which we have even heard disputed facts on the streets. And how do they go about talking about that multiple Israeli human rights organizations have called what's happening in Gaza a genocide? How do they talk about the ICC courts issuing war criminal warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu? These are things that have happened in real life."

– Assemblymember Alex Lee

"This bill also won't solve antisemitism. In fact, my good neighbor to the west of me mentioned painting swastikas on the side of schools. This will not solve that kind of hate. Scheduling meetings on Jewish holidays, this will not solve that kind of ignorance. In fact, even here in the legislature, we have had to adjust our scheduling to that recognition in recent years. We all can and should do better. to be more conscious, to be more aware, and to root out antisemitism wherever we see it, and we cannot legislate that away. That is something each of us individually has to commit to doing."

– Assemblymember Isaac Bryan

"This law must never be used to silence criticism of Israel or to have honest, sometimes difficult conversations about Israel's history, nor should it be used to shut down dialogue about Palestine, war crimes in Gaza, or even Zionism. That kind of critical debate is not only acceptable, it is essential to education."

– Assemblymember Matt Haney

Final vote (Saturday, September 13):

Yes **(71)**
Absentions **(9)**: Arambula, Caloza, Elhawary, Garcia, Kalra, Lee, Muratsuchi, Ortega, Solache



Governor Newsom Signs AB 715 into Law

In the weeks following the legislature passing the bill, CAIR California, the Coalition to Defend Public Education (CCDPE), and opposing labor groups shared concerns with the Governor's office, requesting a veto of the bill due to how teachers and school districts would be impacted and concerns regarding censorship and the undermining of the first amendment in the classroom.

In addition to the dozens of meetings that organizations had with the Governor's office, CCDPE and its member organizations all engaged in grassroots advocacy which included official letters of opposition and thousands of calls and emails asking the Governor to veto AB 715.

Despite the coalition's outreach, there was little meaningful effort to engage with its stakeholders from the Governor's office.

Governor Newsom signed AB 715 into law on October 7, 2025, the second anniversary of Israel's genocide in Gaza. Despite the Governor signing the bill, he included in his signing "AB 715 moved through the legislative process, representatives from the entire education ecosystem - including teachers, administrators, school boards, school staff, students, and civil rights organizations - expressed deep commitment to the goals of the bill, along with urgent concerns about unintended consequences. I appreciate the firm commitments made by the authors of AB 715 to work quickly on a follow-up measure next year to continue addressing these issues. The law went into effect on January 1, 2026 and has yet to see those commitments fulfilled.

The Path Ahead on Fighting Censorship in Public Education

AB 715 sets a dangerous precedent for the entire country. As the Israel Lobby intensely focuses on shutting down any and all criticism of Israel, the example that has been set in California will be copied and replicated throughout state legislatures across the United States. As AB 715 worked its way through the legislature this summer, Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a Zionist organization, declared that the ADL was "going to use the state legislatures" on Fox News. The adoption and implementation of such laws are expected to lead to weaponization of the law to stifle criticism of Israel, effectively an abuse of the legal system for political reasons.

Before AB 715, accusations of antisemitism in public schools have included things which do not constitute antisemitism, but are an embodiment of Palestinian history, culture, and heritage, including displaying Palestinian flags, identifying Palestine as a place a child's family is from, and showcasing a map of historic Palestine. Complaints of expressions of Palestinian heritage and history are expected to increase sharply once the law goes into effect.

CAIR California is currently pursuing legislative action to address the harms of AB 715 by holding the bill's authors to account on their commitments for the clean up legislation. Additionally, the organization is ready to challenge the legality of the law depending on the actual impacts once the law is implemented.

Legal Challenges to AB 715

On the legal front, on November 7, 2025, ADC National filed a preliminary injunction to block the enforcement of AB 715. On December 9, 2025, JPAC announced that Willkie, a law firm led by former Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff (husband of former Vice President Kamala Harris), filed an amicus brief in support of AB 715 in opposition to ADC's lawsuit. Following the December 17, 2025 hearing, a federal district court issued a ruling on January 2, 2026, declining to block the enforcement of AB 715. U.S. District Judge Noël Wise denied the plaintiffs' request for a preliminary injunction, determining they were unlikely to succeed on claims that the law is unconstitutionally vague or violates constitutional rights.

Although the emergency injunction was denied, the court left open the possibility for future legal relief depending on how AB 715 is actively enforced by school districts.

Addressing the Harm of the Bill: "Clean Up" Legislation

On the legislative front, the LA Times reported that there were "strings attached" to Governor Newsom's support of the bill that he urged the bill's authors to "address quickly" and with urgency. Within this report, Assemblymember Zbur stated that he will see through the commitment made regarding clean-up language, specifying that those efforts would address the "factually accurate" language in the law and that it would not prevent instruction of "controversial topics."

On December 9, 2025, the Coalition to Defend Public Education sent a letter to the Legislative Jewish Caucus outlining the commitments made by the bill's authors at the end of the legislative process to "clean up" the bill, and requested their collaboration in working to address the most problematic components of the bill, including:

- The "factually accurate" standard of instruction
- Removing references to the *U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism*
- Changing the coordinator roles to be career civil service positions rather than political appointees

Reporting the Impact of AB 715

Tracking and reporting on these incidents will be crucial for efforts to address the consequences with the law, from both a legislative and legal perspective. Please use the CAIR hate incident form to report any issues that arise in California schools related to censorship of Palestine, criticism of Israel, and/or the weaponization of antisemitism.

For the latest on CAIR California's legislative and advocacy work, follow our California chapters on social media: Los Angeles, San Francisco Bay Area, Sacramento Valley, and San Diego.

Addendum

The Push for Real Clean-Up: AB 2159

Following commitments made by AB 715's authors at the end of the 2025 legislative session, civil rights and education advocates sought meaningful "clean-up" legislation in early 2026. On January 21, 2026, representatives from CAIR-CA, the California Faculty Association, SEIU California, and ACLU California Action met with staff representing the bill's authors and the chairs of the Legislative Jewish Caucus in a good-faith effort to resolve their clearly outlined concerns. However, staff informed the advocates that the authors had no interest in addressing these specific issues and would be focusing on a different set of priorities instead.

When the AB 715 authors failed to urgently introduce these measures, Assemblymember Robert Garcia submitted amendments on March 11 to introduce AB 2159 to address the core issues. A broad coalition supported the bill, which aimed to strike the subjective "factually accurate" standard, remove reliance on the US National Strategy to Combat Antisemitism (which incorporates the problematic IHRA definition), and mandate merit-based civil service hiring for the Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator.

To demand public debate on the bill, CAIR-CA mobilized over 400 California Muslims and community partners to Sacramento on April 13, urging Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas to accept the amendments. Despite these grassroots efforts and formal coalition letters urging its advancement, AB 2159 was held in the Assembly Rules Committee by Assembly Leadership on April 30 without being referred to a policy committee.

An Empty Clean-Up Attempt: AB 2615

Instead of addressing these root issues, AB 715's authors advanced their own severely limited clean-up vehicle, AB 2615 (Zbur). On April 16, Assemblymember Zbur introduced amendments that completely failed to incorporate the coalition's priorities. Similar to the underhanded tactics used to pass AB 715, these amendments were introduced after the Assembly Education Committee's

deadline, effectively blocking concerned stakeholders from submitting official position letters for the public record.

In a continued good-faith effort to engage, CAIR-CA, the California Faculty Association (CFA), and SEIU California submitted a joint Oppose Unless Amended letter on April 20. This letter highlighted their willingness to collaborate while formally acknowledging the bill's failure to resolve the harms of AB 715. Nevertheless, on April 22, AB 2615 passed the Assembly Education Committee with a vote of 6-1 (with 2 abstentions) despite heavy opposition from committee members and education stakeholders, advancing through the legislature while the community-backed AB 2159 was suppressed.

Fighting for Representation: SB 998

Simultaneously, advocacy efforts shifted toward SB 998, sister legislation aimed at refining discrimination prevention roles. CAIR-CA took a "Support if Amended" position, actively urging the creation of an Anti-Muslim Discrimination Deputy Coordinator and exploring structural representation for California Muslims – at a time when approximately half of all Muslim students in California schools experience bullying because of their faith. The coalition heavily reinforced the critical demand that all coordinator roles, including those established by AB 715, must be insulated from shifting political winds by being hired through the state's civil service process rather than serving as political appointments. Despite the advocacy and an uptick in anti-Muslim hate incidents in the state, including a deadly shooting at the Islamic Center of San Diego in May 2026, the Anti-Muslim Discrimination Deputy Coordinator role was not included in the legislation.

The Fight Continues

The fight to protect California's classrooms from politically motivated censorship is far from over. Because AB 2615—in its attempt to undermine efforts by AB 2159—failed to deliver the substantive clean-up required, educators and marginalized students remain vulnerable to the subjective, weaponized language codified by AB 715. As the law's implementation unfolds throughout the year, its detrimental impacts are becoming increasingly evident on the ground. We are already seeing the "factually accurate" standard and the reliance on the IHRA

definition being exploited to file lawsuits and target educators who teach inclusive curricula or discuss Palestinian human rights. This active weaponization confirms the exact chilling effect our coalition warned the legislature about.

As the legal battles progress, the findings and judicial rulings that emerge will directly inform and strengthen future policy campaigns. There is an ongoing commitment to dismantle these censorship frameworks and ensure that discrimination prevention roles operate free from political influence. Genuine, protective reforms that shield all public school students and educators from politically motivated attacks are essential to upholding California's values in our K-12 educational system.

Appendix

AB 1468 and AB 715 Media Coverage

Edsource, Judge rejects lawsuit over 'liberated' ethnic studies classes in LAUSD, John Fensterwald, Dec 5, 2024

Ed source - Will Newsom fund Ethnic Studies?- John Fensterwald, December 24, 2024

Substack Article - AB 1468: The California Jewish Legislative Caucus Introduces an Ethnic Studies Bill to Censor Public Education on Israel and Palestine, Nadia Rahman, February 24, 2025

Santa Barbara Independent - AB 715 Is California's MAGA in Disguise, Marcy Winograd, June 4, 2025

California Globe - New Bill Introduced to Create Content Standards For Ethnic Studies Classes, Evan Symon, February 24, 2025

Politico - Exclusive: Bill Would Restrict Gaza Lessons, Dustin Gardiner, Eric He and Blake Jones, February 24, 2025

Capitol Weekly - Dems tackle controversy over ethnic studies curriculum, Brian Joseph, February 28, 2025

The Mercury News - California Democrats seek to rein in content on Israel in high school ethnic studies, Molly Gibbs, March 3, 2025

Youtube video by Nadia Rahman - AB 1468: Ethnic Studies Bill to Censor Public Education on Palestine, March 3, 2025

LA Progressive - California Israel Lobby Aims to Police Ethnic Studies - Why? , Marcy Winograd, March 4, 2025

CounterPunch - California Teachers Fight Palestine Censorship, Marcy Winograd, March 5, 2025

New Times SLO - A SLO County group asks for Palestinian recognition as Assemblymember Dawn Addis introduced an ethnic studies bill, Bulbul Rajagopal, March 6, 2025

Ed Source - Renewed push to reshape ethnic studies with oversight and new standards, John Fensterwald, March 11, 2025

J Weekly, As California legislators, we must create clear stanards for ethnic studies, Dawn Addis, March 18, 2025

The Lower Frequencies Podcast: Episode 1: POLICING ETHNIC STUDIES: THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE JEWISH CAUCUS AND AB 1468, Sean Malloy, April 14, 2025

J Weekly, 'All Israel, all the time', LTE Larry Hendel, April 17 2025

J Weekly, More Sandler, Less Oversight, LTE Marie Hoff, April 17, 2025

SF Chronicle, board of education says there was antisemitism in a bay area school ethnic studies class, Jill Tucker, April 17, 2025

San Luis Tribune, Demonstrators picket Dawn Addis' office, Chloe Strager, April 25, 2025

Counterpunch, Israel lobby and California Holocaust education, Marcy Winograd, April 30, 2025

Ed Source, California leaders must keep their promise by funding ethnic studies | EdSource, Christine Sleeter, April 22, 2025

Concerned Jewish Faculty and Staff-Boston, Youtube video, Why you should distrust ADL's figures on antisemitism, April 24, 2025

J weekly, https://jweekly.com/2025/05/07/ethnic-studies-dominates-jewish-lobbying-summit-in-sacramento/, May 7, Niva Ashkenazi

LA Progressive, Teachers Oppose AB 715, Marcy Winograd, May 12, 2025

SF Chronicle, Ethnic Studies dead, was it every really alive?, Opinion, Justin Ray, May 15, 2025

Colorado Boulevard, https://www.coloradoboulevard.net/censorship-disguised-as-equity-ab-715-threatens-free-thought-inschools/, Melissa Michelson, May 15, 2025

Substack, AB 715 and the weaponization of antisemitism, Nadia Rahman, May 19

Random Length News, Why Educators Oppose AB 715, Maya Suzuki Daniels, May 21, 2025

SF Chronicle, California anti-discrimination bill faces blowback, Bob Egelko, May 21, 2025

New Times, Antisemitism is Real But Shouldn't Restrict Academic Freedom, Jill Stegman, May 22, 2025

SF Chronicle, LTE, Anti Semitism is Real: A new state anti-discrimination law won't protect against it, David Spero, May 26, 2025

Davis Vanguard SPEAK OUT AGAINST AB 715, K-12 EDUCATIONAL CENSORSHIP, S.Steward, May 27 2025

SF Chronicle, LTE, Bill Discriminates (third letter down), Carla Shick, May 29, 2025

Santa Barbara Independent, AB 715 is California's MAGA in disguise, Marcy Winograd, June 4, 2025

City on a Hill Press, State Bill Threatens Integrity of Ethnic Studies Curricula, Leah Murray, June 6, 2025

LA Progressive video interview and article on AB 715 Taking a Page out of Trump's Playbook: California Legislation Designed to Protect Israeli Apartheid and Genocide, Marcy Winograd and Rick Sterling, July 1, 2025

Jweekly, Opposition-swells-against-landmark-bill-to-curb-antisemitism-in-california-schools, Gabe Stutman, July 11, 2025

Code Pink Teachers Celebrate Motion to Drop ADL, Marcy Winograd, July 15, 2025

Capitalism and Democracy, NEA board defies members' vote on breaking ties to ADL, interview with Marcy Winograd, Jul 21, 2025

J. Weekly, letters to ed on ab 715, https://jweekly.com/2025/07/25/what-is-israel-to-do-trust-teachers-on-ab-715-ethnic-studies-opposition, Laura Einhorn, David Spero, Alex Lantsberg, July 25, 2025

Jacobin, USING PROTECTED IDENTITY TO SUPPRESS HISTORY, Ussama Makdisi, August 15, 2025

New York Times, California, Democrats are Fighting Trumps Battles for Him, Lily Greenberg Call, Op ed, Aug 15, 2025

Santa Cruz Sentinel, SENDING MAGA TO SACRAMENTO, Christine Hong and Sean Malloy, August 19, 2025

Will California state lawmakers follow Trump to censor Palestine? David Mandel, https://medium.com/p/dd11afee667c, Medium, Aug. 24, 2025

Sacramento Bee, Op Ed, CA Democrats Anti-democratic Remedy for Antisemitism in Schools, David Stern and Bruce Heller, August 24, 2025

Analyst News, CA teachers fighting 715, Roberto Camacho, August 29, 2025

Ed Source, AB 715 wrong response to antisemitism, Mara Harvey, September 4, 2025

Politico California, Last minute negs on antisemitism bill, Lindsay Holden, Eric He and Nicole Norman, September 4, 2025

Times of Israel, Clock ticking on bill to make California 1st state with antisemitism watchdog in schools | The Times of Israel, Asaf Eliya Shalev, Sept 4, 2025

LA Progressive, https://www.laprogressive.com/education-reform/attack-on-ethnic-studies, Arlene Inouye, September 6, 2025

SF Chronicle, Pro and Con for AB 715, Two takes: Should California pass AB715 and establish an antisemitism prevention coordinator for K-12 schools?, Rabbi Ryan Bauer and George Bisharat, September 6, 2025 (readers poll)

Mercury News https://www.mercurynews.com/2025/09/10/opinion-california-schools-must-not-enshrine-trumps-weaponization-of-antisemitism/, Mohamed Shehk, September 10

Indy Bay, Amended AB 715: From Explicit to Implicit Pro-Israel Censorship in California Classrooms: Indybay, Jonathan de Noche, September 11, 2025

JNS, https://www.jns.org/california-lawmakers-vote-106-0-to-pass-k-12-jew-hatred-bill-now-bound-for-governors-desk/, Aaron Handler, September 13, 2025

Commonwealth, https://commonwealthbeacon.org/opinion/state-commission-to-combat-antisemitism-misses-the-mark/, Alex Gourevich, Sept 14, 2025

Mercury News, Controversial antisemitism bill awaits Newsom's signature – The Mercury News, Molly Gibbs, Sept 21

Gov. Newsom's AB 715 signing press release, https://www.gov.ca.gov/2025/10/07/governor-newsom-signs-bills-further-cracking-down-on-hate-and-antisemitism-in-california-schools/, October 7, 2025

Makdisi Street Podcast: in-depth interview with Ethnic Studies professors Dr. Theresa Montaño and Dr. Christine Hong. Also available on YouTube.

Cal Matters, Protecting Jewish students or chilling speech? Inside California's 'hardest' fight over antisemitism, Yue Stella Yu and Mikhail Zinshteyn, October 14, 2025

Politico For better or worse': How California's antisemitism bill became a proxy for the war in Gaza, Eric He, October 17, 2025