

Ohio House passes bill to keep politics out of classroom, Dems say it censors teachers

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House Republicans want to keep politics out of the classroom, but Democrats worry a new bill only censors teachers.

House Bill 214, which passed the House Wednesday in a 64-30 vote, would require school districts to set policies that ban requiring teachers, job applicants or students to ascribe to specific political or ideological beliefs. These policies must be publicly available for review.

The bill would not prevent schools from complying with anti-discrimination rules or prohibit teachers from teaching about politics, religion or ideologies, generally.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Adam Holmes, R-Nashport, expressed concern that "Ohio's K-12 public school teachers, staff and students may face negative consequences for expressing certain political perspectives or failing to conform to specific ideological viewpoints."

"Passage of this bill will help ensure all of our public schools remain protected speech environments," Holmes said.

But Democrats and educators say these changes aren't needed. Teachers must follow professional codes of conduct already.

"This is an example of a political effort to censor teachers, to stifle education and to really instill fear among educators at a time when Ohio continues to struggle to attract and retain quality people in the education profession," said Scott DiMauro, president of the Ohio Education Association.

Rep. Sean Brennan, D-Parma, said: "I think that we should trust our teachers who show up for students and selflessly serve them every day."

The bill would need approval from the Ohio Senate before heading to Gov. Mike DeWine's desk.