



STATE OF MICHIGAN
EXECUTIVE OFFICE
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

BRIAN CALLEY
LT. GOVERNOR

June 13, 2016

Michigan House of Representatives
Michigan Senate
State Capitol Building
Lansing, Michigan 48913

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today I signed House Bill 4493 into law but felt further explanation of my position on this matter was warranted.

Our next generation of leaders needs to have the wherewithal to recognize and help prevent widespread harm to their fellow men and women. Teaching the students of Michigan about genocide is important because we should remember and learn about these terrible events in our past while continuing to work toward creating a more tolerant society.

There is, however, a delicate balance we need to be mindful of when we consider requiring that certain subjects be included in our statewide education system. The recommendations of local school boards, teachers, other professional educators and parents need to be considered when developing a curriculum. My signing of HB 4493 should in no way signal any indication that elected state officials are the best guiding voice on what specific material should be taught in the classroom.

Further, there has been much discussion on international policy and the legal definition of genocide as this bill has worked its way through the legislative process. Despite the definition of genocide being defined by the United Nations becoming the norm in international law, not all countries and governments accept it as such. Because of this, there is continued debate as to what historical events should be classified as genocide.


This has been most recently demonstrated by the approval of a resolution by the German parliament on June 2, 2016, declaring the mass killings of Armenians during the years 1915-1920 as genocide. With this resolution, more than 20 countries recognize, in one format or another, this tragedy a genocide. A substantial number of states within the United States also have recognized these events as a genocide.

The legislation I signed today requires instruction on the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide, but is not limited to these two events. There are, unfortunately, other instances, of atrocities that would be beneficial for students to learn about regardless of whether they meet a certain definition. When and how to teach students about these events would be best left to the educational experts trained to do so.

Of course, it is my hope that future generations who would learn about any atrocities would do so only in the context of a history book because they would be living in a more tolerant and cooperative society.

Thank you for your efforts in this matter and I look forward to continue working with you on promoting a more peaceful and better world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Snyder", written in a cursive style.

Rick Snyder
Governor