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County wants Coal Creek back in class

Heather Miller
hmiller@mycouriernews.com

Students across Tennessee may no longer be taught the history of the Coal Creek Wars.

Earlier this month, the Tennessee Department of Education published a draft of its new proposed standards for its K-12 social studies curriculum.

The Coal Creek story is part of several events in Tennessee history currently facing removal from the new social studies standards.

The Anderson County

Board of Commissioners is now joining local and state-wide efforts in urging the state Department of Education to re-instill the Coal Creek story and other key state historical events in the state curriculum.

Commissioners unanimously approved a resolution on Monday asking the state department of education to amend its required public school curriculum and return the Coal Creek story to the classroom.

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Class

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In presenting the resolution to Commissioners Monday night, Anderson County Law Director Jay Yeager called the Coal Creek story "a vital piece of Anderson County history and the history of the mountains."

The resolution states that Coal Creek is a significant part of Tennessee history that "needs to be retained and taught as part of the required teaching curriculum for public schools" because it is crucial to understanding the history of Reconstruction in Tennessee and the United States post-Civil War.

Coal Creek "will only now be a part of advanced high school history elective classes," the resolution said.

The resolution argues that the Coal Creek saga sheds light on the corruption inher-

ent in the convict leasing system in the Jim Crow South.

"Coal Creek miners were instrumental to ending convict leasing at a time when prison, labor, and civil rights activists failed in such attempts, thus making Tennessee the first Southern state to do so," the resolution said.

Commissioner Shain Vowell (Dist. 4), a proponent of the Coal Creek resolution, said the history of Coal Creek is very important to him and his family.

"I want my children and my grandchildren to know what our ancestors did," Vowell said.

Commissioner Myron Iwanski (Dist. 8) added that in addition to its historical relevance, the Coal Creek story is beneficial to the county in attracting visitors and tourists to the county looking to learn more about the history of the area.

"I think Anderson County has some real history stories

to tell that are nationally significant... I think we need to continue to promote those kinds of things all we can because we're looking at visitors to come here for the national park, and for these other reasons. I think when they come they're going to come for all those things. I think we need to tell that whole story and this is an important part," Commissioner Iwanski noted.

The resolution also requests that the Anderson County School System continue to teach Coal Creek to county students.

"Dr. Tim Parrott has agreed that this is a worthy cause. In fact, they still teach it at Lake City Middle School despite what the state mandates, so it's alive and well in Anderson County public schools," Yeager said.

