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I oppose HB 698 and SB1 before it because these bills are incredibly vague when it comes to defining "controversial subjects" and how to teach them. ODHE is supposed to provide guidance on interpreting what is and is not a controversial subject, but their [SB1 guidance website](#) basically offers nothing to confused faculty members who are just trying to make practical decisions about their courses. "Controversial subjects", according to SB1, require extra time to represent both sides, which affects how much material an instructor can cover during a semester. This lack of clarity around what is and is not a controversial subject and the practical problems created by this ambiguity affect the sciences as much as the humanities.

Whereas SB1 takes vague criteria around controversial subjects and uses it as a factor in individual promotion and tenure (and post-tenure) decisions, HB 698 takes these same vague regulations and applies it to the state share of the budgets for public universities in Ohio. Last year, for example, due to the lack of any meaningful guidance from ODHE, different legal departments at different public universities in Ohio arrived at different conclusions about whether or not it is appropriate for their faculty to travel to scientific conferences organized by groups like the Society for Chicano and Native American Scientists, and the National Society of Black Physicists in order to advertise graduate programs in Ohio. So last year OSU did not have a booth at these events like we normally would whereas other Ohio universities did. If HB 698 passes, should these universities expect to see a reduction in the state share of public instruction just for advertising their Ph.D. programs? This is just one specific example of the can of worms that HB 698 would open up. I can think of 100 more.

HB 698 looks to me like a system where the goalposts are going to move according to the whimsy of whoever is tasked with looking over the various documents that administrators are required to submit. A track and field event where the height of the hurdles can change without warning is called a circus. Until the legislature can define what a "controversial subject" is and make a host of other fine grained decisions about what is and is not allowed for recruiting, or how campus free speech is supposed to be measured, and to write all of this down in a way ODHE can actually interpret, I ask that you not jeopardize the salaries of hard-working faculty and hard-working staff members at public universities across Ohio.