

MDE pays \$7,000 to American Experiment for stalling data request

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) agreed to pay Center of the American Experiment \$7,000 to settle a lawsuit over their failure to fulfill a data practices request. American Experiment will receive \$3,500 in monetary relief from MDE for hindering public access to critical government information, a violation of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. Upper Midwest Law Center (UMLC) will also receive \$3,500 for their successful representation of American Experiment in this matter.

On October 2, 2024, American Experiment requested the ethnic studies framework document produced by Gov. Tim Walz's ethnic studies workgroup. After receiving no communication about the request from MDE for 56 days, a lawsuit was filed in Anoka County on November 27, 2024. Under the terms of the \$7,000 settlement, American Experiment has agreed to dismiss the lawsuit with prejudice.

"Instead of simply emailing us a document everyone knew existed, the Department of Education chose to protect Gov. Walz by stonewalling our request until after the 2024 election," said John Hinderaker, president of Center of the American Experiment. "Citizens shouldn't have to hire a lawyer to access information from their government that is clearly public in the eyes of the law."

American Experiment policy fellow Catrin Wigfall attended several meetings of the ethnic studies working group in 2024 and knew the framework document existed and understood it was not protected by the data practices act as the product of a public working group. MDE announced an opportunity for public feedback on the draft framework from August 9-22, 2024, but after Walz joined the national Democratic ticket for vice president on August 6, 2024, the feedback period never happened. Minnesotans are still waiting for the opportunity to weigh in.

American Experiment finally received the framework document December 6, 2024, from MDE's lawyers at the Minnesota Attorney General's office. The framework was accompanied by a [cover memo](#) stating the Walz administration will not adopt it in its current form "as it does not appear to satisfy the requirements of the law because it does not align with K-12 academic standards."

"Parents, teachers and the public are still waiting for guidance from the Department of Education on how to implement the new ethnic studies mandate," said Catrin Wigfall, education policy fellow at American Experiment. "It appears MDE is embarrassed by the current draft, and they should be. This framework represents a radical form of ethnic studies that fundamentally changes teaching and learning in Minnesota."

For more information on Minnesota's push to enact ethnic studies, click here:

[Repeal Radical Ethnic Studies](#)

*Bill Walsh is the Director of Marketing and Communications at Center of the American Experiment.
bill.walsh@americanexperiment.org*