

July 16, 2013

To: Members of the Tennessee State Board of Education

**From: The Board of Directors, Cumberland Chapter of the
Urban and Regional Information Systems Association**



The Cumberland Chapter of URISA (a duly incorporated entity within the State of Tennessee) and its parent organization, the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA), are made up of professionals and leaders in the field of Geographic Information Systems and Geospatial Sciences. The Board of Directors for the Cumberland Chapter of URISA, has reviewed the recent recommendation of the Tennessee Department of Education to lower the standard for geography instruction in Tennessee. We believe that the global economy and society that we live in today actually demands even more rigorous standards for geographic knowledge than what was used in the past. Incorporating geography into history studies falls far short of what is needed by a functioning member of society where location is a key component of governance, marketing and public safety. In addition, a 2012 study by the Boston Consulting Group, commissioned by several members of the Geospatial Industry including National Geographic, Google and ESRI, stated that: the “U.S. geospatial industry generated \$73B in revenue last year, with half a million high-wage jobs” as well as “the industry is growing at between 25-30% per year”. For Tennessee to benefit from such a high growth, high wage profession, we need to produce high school graduates who are well versed in geography and the geosciences. These new standards will not achieve that.

The Board of Directors of the Cumberland Chapter of URISA hereby strongly recommends that the Tennessee State Board of Education NOT adopt the recommendation of the Tennessee State Department of Education in regards to standards for geographic instruction in grades K-12 and instead, instruct that department to actually develop more rigorous standards for geographic instruction as part of the core curriculum for social studies, science, technology and mathematics. We urge the Board of Education to consider the resolution of the American Association of Geographers supporting K-12 geography education that can be found at:

http://www.aag.org/cs/about_aag/policy/geography_education .

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim H. McDonough".

Kim H. McDonough, GISP
President

About the Cumberland Chapter of URISA: URISA - *The Association for GIS Professionals* - is a leading provider of learning and knowledge for the GIS community. The Cumberland Chapter of URISA is a collaborative community of GIS professionals in Kentucky and Tennessee with a local focus and an international perspective. Our mission is to encourage the advancement of geospatial knowledge through education, professional development, ethical practice and advocacy.