The last year saw much controversy over emails obtained by The Associated Press in which (then-)Gov. Mitch Daniels and his advisers condemned the use of Howard Zinn’s historical writings at a 2010 Indiana University summer institute for teachers. Daniels wrote, “Disqualify the propaganda and highlight (if there’s any) the more useful offerings. Don’t the ed schools have at least some substantive PD (Professional Development) courseware to upgrade knowledge of math, science, etc.?”

The problem with Daniels’ statement is that the summer institute in question was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and led by distinguished faculty from arts and sciences disciplines outside of education.

Daniels’ emails, however, reflect an attitude that drove the Indiana Department of Education under Tony Bennett to propose the Rules for Educator Preparation and Accountability (REPA), designed to change the way teachers are prepared and licensed in Indiana. Promoted under the false premise that education schools do not require subject-area content courses from their students, REPA would have capped the number of education credit hours universities could require for education majors and minors; specify the courses education programs must include in their curriculum; and define the content of those courses. Such governmental intrusion into the university curriculum would have been unprecedented, wrong and counterproductive. In fact, education majors often must take more content courses in the students’ subject area of teaching than the disciplinary majors require.

Fortunately, the Indiana Professional Standards Board, which at the time had jurisdiction for rules governing teacher preparation program approval and licensure, balked at proposed changes. But the IPSB was dismantled as part of a law signed by Daniels that transferred IPSB authority to the State Board of Education. With support of the board, Bennett reintroduced what became known as REPA 2, which made it possible for teachers to add teaching licenses and receive permanently renewable “adjunct permits” to teach without taking any education courses.

The hostile attitude toward professional teacher preparation that prevailed among the governor’s office, State Board members and Bennett is evident in some of the emails obtained by The AP. In one, a board member recommended that Bennett conduct a review of a university’s teacher education curriculum because he thought the review “Would force the daylight out of the excrement.”

After his loss to Glenda Ritz, Bennett and the board rush to approve REPA 2 despite overwhelming public opposition. However, the Indiana attorney general opined that appropriate procedures had not been followed, and REPA 2 would have to be repromulgated.

The new State Board of Education has reintroduced the board-approved version of REPA 2 as REPA 3, which includes the adjunct permit and provisions for school principal and superintendent preparation and will lower standards and de-professionalize teaching.

Public hearings on REPA 3 are scheduled for today in Indianapolis and Thursday in Evansville. I am hopeful that with the appointment of six new members, this time the State Board will be more objective, transparent and responsive to public comment.

Gonzalez is dean of the Indiana University School of Education.