



# National Earth Science Teachers Association

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March 16, 2012

Tennessee State Senators  
Tennessee State Representatives  
Governor Bill Haslam

Dear Tennessee Leaders,

On behalf of the thousands of geoscience teachers represented by the National Earth Science Teachers Association, I write to express my grave misgivings about Senate Bill 893 and House Bill 368, currently under consideration by the Tennessee General Assembly.

These bills misrepresent key scientific concepts and principles, and would undermine the education of Tennessee's students. The bills present topics including evolution and global warming as scientific subjects which "may cause controversy" or "debate and disputation." These ideas are not scientifically controversial, and when taught correctly, do not cause debate or disputation in science classrooms. The only controversy, debate, or disputation about the legitimacy of these concepts occurs in the political arena, and these disputes do not belong in science classrooms.

NESTA affirms, along with the National Science Teachers Association, the National Academy of Sciences, the Tennessee Science Teachers Association, the American Geophysical Union, the National Association of Geoscience Teachers, and other leading scientific and educational organizations, that evolution is central to biology and to the earth sciences and that it is an essential component of science classes. Furthermore, based on the overwhelming scientific evidence, NESTA agrees with the positions taken by many other organizations and leading scientists that Earth's climate is changing, that human activities are responsible for much of the warming seen in recent years, and the science of climate change is a fundamental part of earth science education.

These bills encourage teachers to emphasize what are misrepresented as "scientific weaknesses" of evolution and climate change (among others). In practice, this term is often applied to scientifically unwarranted and widely-debunked attacks by creationists and others attempting to cloak a political agenda in the guise of science. While scientific research continues to illuminate how evolution and climate change influence the world around us, there is no scientific debate about whether they do so, and these bills are wrong to suggest otherwise.

By undermining the teaching of evolution and climate change, and by singling out science classes for special scrutiny, HB 368 and SB 893 would damage the scientific preparation of Tennessee's students, harm Tennessee's national reputation, and weaken its efforts to participate in the 21st century economy.

We therefore urge you and your colleagues to vote against this legislation, and ask that the Governor veto this legislation, if it reaches his desk. This proposed law is unnecessary, anti-scientific, bad for Tennessee's future and very likely unconstitutional. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Roberta Johnson  
Executive Director  
National Earth Science Teachers Association