



Tennessee Science Teachers Association

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On behalf of the science educators of Tennessee represented by the Tennessee Science Teachers Association (TSTA), I write to you as their President to express my grave misgivings about House Bill 368 being introduced by Representative Bill Dunn at the Education Committee meeting. This bill purports to encourage our State's science teachers to teach "scientific controversies" and to protect them from administrative discipline if they choose to do so. HB 368 singles out evolution as an example of a "scientific subject" that "can cause controversy." The bill states that "teachers shall be permitted to help students understand, analyze, critique, and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of existing scientific theories covered in the course being taught."

We are in complete agreement with this last statement and are confident that good science teachers throughout our State are already doing this in an educational environment supported by their administrators. Therefore, this bill is unnecessary. However, this proposed legislation's major flaw implies that there is a scientific controversy surrounding evolution. As teachers and developers of other teachers, the members of TSTA recognize some communities' contextual climate regarding the teaching of evolution. However, we also recognize that the scientific theory of evolution is accepted by mainstream scientists around the world as the cornerstone of biology and as the single, unifying explanation for the diversity of life on earth. This bill is an anti-evolutionary attempt to allow non-scientific alternatives to evolution (such as creationism and intelligent design) to be introduced into our public schools. Scientific theories must provide natural and testable explanations. Creationism and intelligent design fail on both counts because they invoke supernatural ultimate causes (e.g. God, or an unspecified "intelligent designer") that cannot be tested by the tools of science (e.g. no one can disprove the existence of God). These ideas are religiously motivated (directly countering Section 1e of HB 368) and have been shown time and time again (from court cases in Arkansas and Louisiana in the 1980s to the Dover, Pennsylvania, intelligent design trial in 2004-05) to violate the Establishment Clause of the 1st Amendment to the Constitution.

We therefore urge you and your colleagues to vote against this legislation; a proposed law that is unnecessary, anti-scientific and very likely unconstitutional. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,
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