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## [Louisiana's latest creationism bill moves to House floor](#) [3]



On May 21, 2008, [Senate Bill 733](#) [4] (PDF), the so-called Louisiana Science Education Act, was unanimously passed by the Louisiana House Education Committee. Before passage, the bill was amended slightly from the form which passed the Senate on April 29, 2008, as previously [reported](#) [5] by NCSE. It now moves to the full House.

The Associated Press [reports](#) [6] (May 21, 2008) that, over the course of a hearing that lasted close to three hours, "Science teachers called Senate Bill 733 a veiled attempt to add religion to science classes." The bill singles evolution out from other scientific theories, and states that a teacher "may use supplemental textbooks and other instructional materials to help students understand, analyze, critique, and review scientific theories in an objective manner."

In the House hearing, some critics pointed out that the bill's stated goals are already covered by policies set by the state's Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Baton Rouge Advocate [reports](#) [7] Tammy Wood, a science teacher from the Zachary, Louisiana school district, told the committee: "There is absolutely no need for this bill," and added "I am begging you here today to kill this bill."

After the bill passed the state Senate, Alan Leshner, CEO of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, wrote to the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* (May 6, 2008), and [echoed](#) [8] the same sentiments. "Proponents offer deceptive arguments about encouraging students to think critically," he observed. "But Louisiana's education standards already do that. The real intent is to introduce classroom materials that raise misleading objections to the well-documented science of evolution and offer a religious idea called intelligent design as a supposed alternative. That would unleash an assault against scientific integrity, leaving students confused about science and unprepared to excel in a modern workforce."

While bill sponsor Senator Ben Nevers (D-Bogalusa) insisted to the AP on May 21 that "I plainly state in this bill that no religion will be taught," he previously [told](#) [9] the *Hammond Daily Star* (April 6, 2008) that the bill was drafted by a group which "believe[s] that scientific data related to creationism should be discussed." Similarly, bill supporter David Tate, a member of the Livingston Parish School Board, [told the New Orleans Times-Picayune](#) [10] (April 18, 2008), "I believe that both sides -- the creationism side and the evolution side -- should be presented and let students decide what they believe," adding that the bill is needed because "teachers are scared to talk about" creationism.

At the hearing in the House committee, Caroline Crocker, CEO of the Intelligent Design and Evolution Awareness (IDEA) Center, "said Darwinian evolution is outdated and doesn't explain new findings in science. She also said she had been persecuted in the academic world because of her views," according to the AP. NCSE [examined](#) [11] her claims of persecution in our response to her appearance in Ben Stein's antievolution movie, *Expelled*.

Opponents cited these statements to argue that the bill would open classrooms to creationism. House Education Committee Chairman Don Trahan (R-Lafayette) responded by proposing an amendment which the AP explains "would give the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education the ability to prohibit introduction of materials."

NCSE board member Barbara Forrest told the committee that even the amended version was too broadly written. "Anything could get into the classroom," the AP reports her telling the committee.

That prospect [worries](#) [12] the Baton Rouge *Advocate's* editorial board, which wrote (May 21, 2008) that the bill will "provide a full-time living for dozens of lawyers in the American Civil Liberties Union. They will have a field day suing taxpayer-funded schools as groups use Nevers' language to push Bible-based texts in the schools. That's unconstitutional, and we can see the taxpayer paying -- and paying, and paying -- for this policy in the future."

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