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When the Florida legislature ended its session on May 2, 2008, legislative attempts to open the door to creationism died in the House of Representatives. Senate Bill 2692, as originally introduced, purported to protect the right of teachers to "objectively present scientific information relevant to the full range of scientific views regarding biological and chemical evolution." The bill resembled a string of similar bills in Alabama as well as a model bill that the Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture, the institutional home of "intelligent design" creationism, recently began to promote, and was widely viewed as a backlash against the treatment of evolution in Florida's new state science standards.

As NCSE [reported](#) [4], SB 2692's originally identical House counterpart, HB 1483, was substantially altered, requiring public schools to provide "[a] thorough presentation and critical analysis of the scientific theory of evolution." The phrase "critical analysis" is commonly used by "intelligent design" advocates in their campaign to undermine the teaching of evolution. The sponsor of SB 2692, Senator Ronda Storms (R-District 10), then sought to smooth the bill's passage by revising it to match HB 1483, but was unsuccessful. On receiving SB 2692 from the Senate, the House substituted the text of HB 1483 and returned it to the Senate, which then restored the text of the bill and sent it back to the House, where it died. HB 1483 was already tabled, and is now dead, too.

Throughout the discussion of SB 2692, its supporters maintained a studied vagueness about what "scientific information" was contemplated. Asked by the *Miami Herald* (March 13, 2008) whether "intelligent design" constituted "scientific information" in the sense of the bill, for example, a

representative of the Discovery Institute equivocated, saying, "In my personal opinion, I think it does. But the intent of this bill is not to settle that question," and adding, unhelpfully, "The intent of this bill is ... it protects the 'teaching of scientific information.'" And during debate on the Senate floor, Storms was noticeably reluctant to address the question of whether the bill would license the teaching of creationism, preferring instead simply to recite the bill's text.

Storms was also unable to justify the bill's claims of persecution. A report to the Senate Education Pre-K-12 Committee [stated](#) [5] (PDF), "According to the Department of Education, there has never been a case in Florida where a public school teacher or public school student has claimed that they have been discriminated against based on their science teaching or science course work," and the *St. Petersburg Times* (March 6, 2008) pointedly [commented](#) [6], "most of the evolution-related pressure being put on science teachers is aimed at those who want to teach the scientific consensus about evolution, not those who want to teach the 'full range of scientific views' - which would presumably include the fringe notion that evolution is not backed by strong evidence."

Similarly, the sponsor of HB 1483, Representative Alan Hays (R-District 25), was forced to acknowledge that "he didn't have any names" of teachers who feared retribution for "teaching the 'holes' in evolution," the *Miami Herald* (April 28, 2008) [reported](#) [7]. His idea of "critical analysis of the scientific theory of evolution" was suggested by his comment, reported by the *Herald*, "No fossils have been found and no witness has ever seen one species turn into another. This is only a theory." Representative Carl Domino (R-District 83), voting against the bill, commented, "There are a lot of strange things out there that I don't want teachers teaching," [according](#) [8] to the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* (April 28, 2008).

Nevertheless, the bills passed their respective houses, as NCSE [reported](#) [9]. Whether due to the intransigence of their supporters or to the host of other issues crowding the legislative calendar, however, a compromise was not reached before the end of the legislative session. In its editorial reviewing the accomplishments of the legislature, the *Tampa Tribune* (May 3, 2008) [commented](#) [10], "The session will be remembered for what *wasn't* done to compromise the quality of education in Florida" (emphasis in original), immediately adding, "Sen. Ronda Storms was rebuked in her effort to infuse religion into lessons on biological evolution."

NCSE congratulates and thanks those in the Sunshine State who fought against these antievolution bills, including the editorial boards of the state's newspapers, the writers and framers of the state science standards, scientists at the state's universities and in industry, the ACLU of Florida, a handful of vocal legislators from both parties, and, especially, the grassroots group Florida Citizens for Science, whose spokesperson Brandon Haught [commented](#) [11] at the end of the legislative session, "Let us take a moment of silence for House Bill 1483 and Senate Bill 2692, the deceptively named 'academic freedom' bills. Time of death: 6 p.m." But looking ahead to the challenges of the next legislative session, Haught added, "I doubt they will rest in peace, though."

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