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## [Opposition to the antievolution bills in Florida](#) [3]

The antievolution bills recently introduced in the Florida legislature continue to elicit opposition. The bills closely resemble a string of similar bills in [Alabama](#) [4] - HB 391 and SB 336 in 2004; HB 352, SB 240, and HB 716 in 2005; HB 106 and SB 45 in 2006 - 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. [Asked](#) [5] by the *Miami Herald* (March 13, 2008) whether "intelligent design" constituted "scientific information" in the sense of the bill, 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.'"

In a [press release](#) [6] (document) issued on March 17, 2008, a majority of the writers and framers of the Florida state science standards denounced the bills, House Bill 1483 and Senate Bill 2692, which purport to protect the right of teachers to "objectively present scientific information relevant to the full range of scientific views regarding biological and chemical evolution." Describing the bills as "a subterfuge for injecting the religious beliefs held by some into the science classroom," the writers and framers emphasized their support of "the discussion of scientific questions - including those in evolution - in the science classroom," but added, "these discussions should be conducted in an evidence-based manner that conforms to the Nature of Science benchmarks in the science standards recently approved by the Florida Board of Education."

The writers and framers were not alone. In a [press release](#) [7] issued on March 12, 2008, the ACLU of Florida's executive director Howard Simon commented, "The presumption of this bill is that all you have to do to teach something in a science class is to call it science." Although "intelligent design" is not explicitly mentioned in the bills as within "the full range of scientific views," it is not explicitly excluded, either, and Simon added, "Simply saying something is science does not make it so and calling Intelligent Design science, does not make it science. ... Allowing schools to masquerade Intelligent Design as

science would be a blunder and an embarrassment for the Florida Legislature. The courts have spoken on this issue and the message was clear: Intelligent Design, because it relies on a supernatural power, is a religious view not a scientific view."

Newspapers in Florida also continue to decry the bills. The *Tampa Tribune's* columnist Daniel Ruth [complained](#) [8] (March 8, 2008), "Of course Storms and her legislative Taliban are attempting to undermine the Board of Education's established science standards to finagle religious concepts like creationism and/or the Wizard In The Sky theology into the teaching of biology." More sedately, the editorial page editor of the *Tallahassee Democrat* (March 15, 2008) [observed](#) [9], "If the full Legislature goes along with this galling intervention into daily classroom instruction, teachers will be able to teach whatever they want regardless of state standards, and teenagers will be endlessly debating the specifics of things they cannot possibly understand because they've never been taught solid, well-considered and agreed-upon instructional materials."

Writing in the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* (March 20, 2008), columnist Michael Mayo [commented](#) [10], "Just when Florida's science classrooms seemed safe for evolution, along come some legislators with a thinly veiled attempt to inject religion under the guise of 'academic freedom.' ... The bill is written with so much mumbo jumbo and wiggle room, you wonder what the true motives are." Noting that the sponsor of HB 1483, Alan Hays, wasn't willing similarly to promote the "academic freedom" of "health teachers who want to discuss a full range of information in sex education classes, like birth control and abortion," Mayo concluded, "With intellectual inconsistency such as this, it's hard to see this effort as anything other than a ham-handed attempt to keep the flames of religion vs. evolution in public schools burning."

The fate of the bills is uncertain. The education blog of the *St. Petersburg Times* (March 17, 2008) [comments](#) [11], "It's anyone's guess how much traction the bills will get, but it's not hard to envision a scenario where they end up on Gov. Crist's desk. On the House side, the bill has the support of House Speaker Marco Rubio, R-Miami, who is widely considered to be a future candidate for governor and could use the bill to shore up support from religious conservatives. On the Senate side, the education committee headed by Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, is shaping up to be the key hurdle." HB 1483 was sent to the Schools & Learning Council on March 7, 2008, but was not considered at its March 18, 2008, meeting; SB 2692 was sent to the Senate Education Pre-K-12 and Judiciary committees on March 20, 2008. Florida Citizens for Science is providing [background information](#) [12] (PDF) about, and a [critique](#) [13] (PDF) of, the bills via its [blog](#) [14].

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