



Published on NCSE (<https://ncse.com>)

[Home](#) > Santorum Amendment Stripped from Education Bill

---

SHARE TWEET EMAIL [PRINT](#) [1]

[NCSE Staff](#) [2]

12.21.2001

## [Santorum Amendment Stripped from Education Bill](#) [3]

The Elementary and Secondary Education Authorization Act which is headed for the President's signature does not contain the antievolution "Santorum amendment", though there is brief mention of the topic of evolution in explanatory materials appended to the law. The good news for teachers is that they will not have to teach evolution any differently as a result of the new legislation.

### **Background**

Since the summer of 2001, a joint Senate-House conference committee has attempted to resolve the House and Senate versions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Authorization Act (the "Education Bill"). The Senate had added a "sense of the Senate" amendment proposed by Pennsylvania's Senator Rick Santorum that singled out evolution as a controversial idea.

The original Santorum amendment said:

"It is the sense of the Senate that:

(1) good science education should prepare students to distinguish the data or testable theories of science from philosophical or religious claims that are made in the name of science; and

(2) where biological evolution is taught, the curriculum should help students to understand why the subject generates so much continuing controversy, and should prepare the students to be informed participants in public discussions regarding the subject."

This language, because it singled out evolution as a controversial theory, caused the officers of almost one hundred scientific societies representing over 100,000 scientists to call upon the conference committee chairs to drop the Santorum amendment. (See

[http://www.agiweb.org/gap/legis107/evolutionletter\\_update0801.html](http://www.agiweb.org/gap/legis107/evolutionletter_update0801.html) [4]) In December 2001, the joint committee finished its work, and submitted the compromise bill to Congress, which passed the bill and sent it to President Bush for his signature.

## The Good News

The good news is that the Santorum amendment has disappeared from the bill, appearing only in altered form in the Conference Report, buried deep in the "Joint Explanatory Statement of the Committee of Conference" in Title I, Part A, as item 78.

Item 78 says:

"The conferees recognize that a quality science education should prepare students to distinguish the data and testable theories of science from religious or philosophical claims that are made in the name of science. Where topics are taught that may generate controversy (such as biological evolution), the curriculum should help students to understand the full range of scientific views that exist, why such topics may generate controversy, and how scientific discoveries can profoundly affect society."

The Joint Explanatory Statement is not part of the bill itself, but an explanation of how the conference committee brought together the various provisions of the House and Senate bills. The law itself does not mention "evolution", nor does it include any sentiments reflecting the Santorum amendment. Teachers do not have to alter how they teach evolution as a result of the Education Bill.

More good news is that the obscure two-sentence distillation of the Santorum amendment reflects the conference committee's wish to keep "religious and philosophical claims that are made in the name of science" out of the science classroom, a position that NCSE has always supported. Creation science, intelligent design theory, and philosophical materialism qualify as "religious or philosophical claims that are made in the name of science" and thus teachers are discouraged from presenting them.

## The Sort-of Bad News

The bad news is that evolution is again singled out but even here creationists got less than they wanted. Whereas evolution was the only controversial scientific topic in the original Santorum amendment, Item 78 includes evolution as a parenthetical example of a controversial issue.

It appears as if the conference committee largely heeded the call of the officers of the scientific societies. The scientists requested the Senate and House conference committee chairs to drop the Santorum amendment which they did. The inclusion of a modified and watered-down form of the amendment with no force of law, buried deep in explanatory material, was probably intended to appease religiously conservative constituents, politics being after all the art of compromise. But, to reiterate: teachers do not have to alter how they teach evolution as a result of the Education Bill.

[Anti-Evolution](#) [5]

[2001](#) [6]

[National](#) [7]

[+ read](#) [3]

---

**Source URL:** <https://ncse.com/news/2001/12/santorum-amendment-stripped-from-education-bill-00249#comment-0>

**Links**

- [1] <https://ncse.com/printpdf/12519>
- [2] <https://ncse.com/users/ncse-staff>
- [3] <https://ncse.com/news/2001/12/santorum-amendment-stripped-from-education-bill-00249>
- [4] [http://www.agiweb.org/gap/legis107/evolutionletter\\_update0801.html](http://www.agiweb.org/gap/legis107/evolutionletter_update0801.html)
- [5] <https://ncse.com/news/anti-evolution>
- [6] <https://ncse.com/news/2001>
- [7] <https://ncse.com/news/national>