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## [Antievolutionist appointed to head Texas state board of education](#) [3]

On July 17, 2007, Don McLeroy was appointed by Texas governor Rick Perry (R) to chair the state board of education, succeeding Geraldine Miller. A member of the board for the last eight years, McLeroy was [described](#) [4] by the *Dallas Morning News* (July 18, 2007) as "aligned with social conservative groups known for their strong stands on evolution, sexual abstinence and other heated topics covered in textbooks" and as "[o]ne of four board members who voted against current high school biology books because of their failure to list weaknesses in the theory of evolution."

In a [statement](#) [5] issued on July 17, 2007, Texas Freedom Network's president Kathy Miller chided Governor Perry for his choice, writing, "Texas parents should be troubled that the governor has appointed as head of the state board a clear ideologue who has repeatedly put his own personal and political agendas ahead of sound science, good health and solid textbooks for students. Even worse, Mr. McLeroy will now be in charge of the board's scheduled revision of the state's science curriculum standards, an area where he has already cast his lot with extremists who want to censor what our schoolchildren learn."

The state's newspapers also expressed concern about McLeroy. Referring to previous ideological struggles in which the board was involved, the *Dallas Morning News* (July 19, 2007) [worried](#) [6], "The elevation of veteran board member Don McLeroy to the chairman's post raises concerns that the board is headed back in that direction," and urged McLeroy to steer clear of "the bitterness of past culture wars." Similarly, the *Austin American-Statesman* (July 22, 2007) [commented](#) [7],[Link broken] "McLeroy's elevation to chairman comes as the board begins a revision of science standards for public schools. That could prove embarrassing for Texas if McLeroy pushes for standards that push theology over science."

A document on McLeroy's personal website entitled "Historical Reality" and dated September 8, 2003, [offers](#) [8] a glimpse of McLeroy's understanding of evolutionary science. Relying on discredited sources as Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box* [9], Jonathan Wells's *Icons of Evolution* [10] and Percival Davis and Dean Kenyon's *Of Pandas and People* [11] as well as on tendentious misreadings of legitimate science and on long-ago-debunked creationist claims, McLeroy argued that common descent is "*only* a hypothesis, and a shaky one at that." He then urged his colleagues on the board to reject the books then under consideration -- a plea that was [ignored](#) [12].

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the sciences are scheduled to be reviewed and revised shortly, with a final vote by the Texas board of education presently expected in November 2008. Textbooks submitted for adoption in Texas are required to conform to the TEKS, so although the next round of biology textbook adoption proceedings is not expected to begin until 2009 at the earliest, it is likely that antievolutionists will try to undermine the treatment of evolution in the TEKS in order to provide a platform to campaign against the treatment of evolution in the biology textbooks.

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[7] [http://www.statesman.com/opinion/content/editorial/stories/07/22/0722education\\_edit.html](http://www.statesman.com/opinion/content/editorial/stories/07/22/0722education_edit.html)

[8] [http://www.donmcleroy.com/Textbooks/Historical\\_Reality.htm](http://www.donmcleroy.com/Textbooks/Historical_Reality.htm)

[9] [http://www.ncseweb.org/resources/articles/7738\\_review\\_of\\_michael\\_behe39s\\_5\\_20\\_2003.asp](http://www.ncseweb.org/resources/articles/7738_review_of_michael_behe39s_5_20_2003.asp)

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