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## [Evolution in Ohio board of education races](#) [3]

In a closely watched race, Tom Sawyer handily defeated incumbent Deborah Owens-Fink for the District 7 seat on the Ohio state board of education. Evolution education was a key issue in the race; on the board, Owens-Fink consistently supported antievolution measures, including the "Critical Analysis of Evolution" model lesson plan, which was [rescinded](#) [4] by the board in February 2006, and dismissed the National Academy of Sciences as "a group of so-called scientists." Defending her stance to *The New York Times* (October 26, 2006), she described the idea that there is a scientific consensus on evolution as "laughable."

Sawyer, in contrast, [told](#) [5] the *Akron Beacon-Journal* (October 23, 2006) that evolution is "grounded in numerous basic sciences and is itself a foundational life science. By contrast, creationism in its many forms is not science but theology." But the campaign was not solely about evolution, he subsequently [explained](#) [6] to the *Beacon-Journal* (November 8, 2006): the evolution debate "was a metaphor for the failure of some members of the state board of education to understand the larger issues facing education in Ohio. I mean funding, quality and governance."

Owens-Fink and Sawyer aired their views during a radio discussion entitled "Evolution's Effect on Voters," broadcast on October 26, 2006, by WCPN, and [available](#) [7] on-line in MP3 format; also on the show were "intelligent design" sympathizer Chris Williams and Brown University cell biologist Kenneth Miller, then stumping for Sawyer and other pro-evolution-education state board of education candidates in Ohio. (A high point occurred when Williams claimed that evolution delayed the discovery of small interfering RNA, and Miller replied by remarking that Craig Mello, who won a Nobel Prize in 2006 for his work on RNA interference, was a student in the first biology class he taught.)

In the four-way race, Sawyer received 54% of the vote to Owens-Fink's 29%, David Kovacs's 12%, and

John Jones's 9%, according to the Associated Press. The *Beacon-Journal* reports that Owens-Fink's campaign spent over \$100,000, while Sawyer's spent about \$50,000 -- both "unusually large sums for a state school board race." Sawyer also enjoyed the support of the pro-science-education coalition [Help Ohio Public Education](#) [8], organized by Lawrence M. Krauss and Patricia Princehouse at Case Western Reserve University and Steve Rissing at the Ohio State University.

Pro-science candidates prevailed elsewhere in Ohio. In District 4, incumbent G. R. "Sam" Schloemer handily defeated challenger John Hritz, [described](#) [9] by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (October 22, 2006) as "a conservative millionaire who wants to include alternatives to Darwinism in science class." In District 2, John Bender narrowly triumphed in a four-way race with 37% of the vote; his closest rival, Kathleen McGarvey, who won 35% of the vote, was described by the *Plain Dealer* as "sympathetic to teaching alternatives to evolution." And in District 8, Deborah L. Cain defeated incumbent Jim Craig, who was [criticized](#) [10] for ambivalence about the "critical analysis" effort.

The result of Ohio's gubernatorial election is also relevant, since eight seats on the state board of education are filled by gubernatorial appointment. Responding to a [question](#) [11] from the *Columbus Dispatch* (July 23, 2006), Democrat Ted Strickland said, "Science ought to be taught in our classrooms. Intelligent design should not be taught as science," while Republican Ken Blackwell said, "I believe in intelligent design, and I believe that it should be taught in schools as an elective," adding, "And I don't see it as having met the generally accepted criteria as a science." Strickland won in the November 7, 2006, election, with 60% of the vote.

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[4] [http://www.ncseweb.org/resources/news/2006/OH/15\\_more\\_on\\_the\\_ohio\\_victory\\_2\\_17\\_2006.asp](http://www.ncseweb.org/resources/news/2006/OH/15_more_on_the_ohio_victory_2_17_2006.asp)

[5] [http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p\\_multi=AK&p\\_product=AK&p\\_theme=realcities2&p\\_action=search&p\\_maxdocs=200&s\\_site=ohio&s\\_trackval=AK&s\\_dispstring=\(foundational\)%20AND%20date\(10/23/2006%20to%2010/22/2006\)&p\\_field\\_date-0=YMD\\_date&p\\_params\\_date-0=date:B,E&p\\_text\\_date-0=10/23/2006%20to%2010/22/2006\)&p\\_field\\_advanced-0=&p\\_text\\_advanced-0=\(foundational\)&xcal\\_numdocs=20&p\\_perpage=10&p\\_sort=YMD\\_date:D&xcal\\_useweights=no](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_multi=AK&p_product=AK&p_theme=realcities2&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&s_site=ohio&s_trackval=AK&s_dispstring=(foundational)%20AND%20date(10/23/2006%20to%2010/22/2006)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=10/23/2006%20to%2010/22/2006)&p_field_advanced-0=&p_text_advanced-0=(foundational)&xcal_numdocs=20&p_perpage=10&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no)

[6] [http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p\\_multi=AK&p\\_product=AK&p\\_theme=realcities2&p\\_action=search&p\\_maxdocs=200&s\\_site=ohio&s\\_trackval=AK&s\\_dispstring=title\(Fink\)%20AND%20date\(11/08/2006%20to%2011/08/2006\)&p\\_field\\_date-0=YMD\\_date&p\\_params\\_date-0=date:B,E&p\\_text\\_date-0=11/08/2006%20to%2011/08/2006\)&p\\_field\\_advanced-0=title&p\\_text\\_advanced-0=\(Fink\)&xcal\\_numdocs=20&p\\_perpage=10&p\\_sort=YMD\\_date:D&xcal\\_useweights=no](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_multi=AK&p_product=AK&p_theme=realcities2&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&s_site=ohio&s_trackval=AK&s_dispstring=title(Fink)%20AND%20date(11/08/2006%20to%2011/08/2006)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=11/08/2006%20to%2011/08/2006)&p_field_advanced-0=title&p_text_advanced-0=(Fink)&xcal_numdocs=20&p_perpage=10&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no)

[7] <http://www.wcpn.org/index.php/WCPN/soi/4408/>

[8] <http://www.ohiohope.org/>

[9] <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/plaindealer/access/1149523811.html?dids=1149523811:1149523811&FMT=ABS&FTS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=Oct+22%2C+2006&author=Scott+Stephens%3BPlain+Dealer+Reporte>

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profile+contest+in+spotlight+Evolution+debate+at+center+of+state+school+board+race

[10] [http://www.ncseweb.org/resources/news/2006/OH/636\\_a\\_clean\\_break\\_from\\_creationis\\_10\\_17\\_2006.asp](http://www.ncseweb.org/resources/news/2006/OH/636_a_clean_break_from_creationis_10_17_2006.asp)

[11]

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[12] <https://ncse.com/news/anti-evolution>

[13] <https://ncse.com/news/2006>

[14] <https://ncse.com/news/ohio>