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The race for the District 7 seat on the Ohio state board of education is in the national spotlight, thanks to a [story](#) [4] in *The New York Times* (October 26, 2006), focusing on the endorsement that Tom Sawyer received from seventy-five professors at Case Western Reserve University. Sawyer is challenging the incumbent, Deborah Owens-Fink, whom the endorsement criticized for having "attempted to cast controversy on biological evolution in favor of an ill-defined notion called Intelligent Design that courts have ruled is religion, not science." The *Times* reported that almost 90% of the science faculty on campus signed the endorsement.

Defending her support of the "Critical Analysis of Evolution" model lesson plan and the corresponding indicator in the state standards -- both of which were [rescinded](#) [5] by the board in February 2006 -- Owens-Fink told the *Times* that the idea that there is a scientific consensus on evolution was "laughable." The *Times's* reporter, Cornelia Dean, correctly observed that "the theory of evolution is the foundation for modern biology, and there is no credible scientific challenge to it as an explanation for the diversity and complexity of life on earth," citing the authority of groups such as the National Academy of Sciences -- which Owens-Fink dismissed in the past as "a group of so-called scientists."

Owens-Fink is facing three challengers for the District 7 seat (which encompasses Ashtabula, Portage, Summit, and Trumbull counties, including Ohio's fifth largest city, Akron): John Jones, who works for the utility company Ohio Edison; Dave Kovacs, a philosophy student at the University of Akron; and Sawyer, a former teacher, mayor of Akron, and member of Congress, who enjoys the support of the pro-science-education coalition [Help Ohio Public Education](#) [6], organized by Lawrence M. Krauss and Patricia Princehouse at Case Western Reserve and Steve Rissing at Ohio State University.

Prompted by the *Akron Beacon-Journal* (October 23, 2006), the candidates [discussed](#) [7] **[Link broken]**

the [proposed](#) [8], [modified](#) [9], and [abandoned](#) [10] "Framework for Teaching Controversial Issues" template, which was widely viewed as continuing the "Critical Analysis of Evolution" effort. Jones and Owens-Fink defended the template, Kovacs called instead for "elective classes in philosophy," and Sawyer replied, "I support teaching evolution. It 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. And while faith is important to most Americans, its interpretation is best left to our many diverse faith communities."

The Newhouse News Service [reports](#) [11] **[Link broken]** (October 26, 2006) that Owens-Fink "had raised nearly \$60,000 for the battle through September, according to state records," while Sawyer "had raised less than a fifth of what Owens Fink had." Still, Sawyer expressed optimism, commenting, "If I don't get completely avalanched by money, I ought to be able to win this ... I don't think anyone in Ohio brings a greater depth or breadth of experience than I bring to this." And Kenneth R. Miller of Brown University, who testified for the plaintiffs in *Kitzmiller v. Dover*, will be [stumping](#) [12] for Sawyer and other pro-evolution-education state board of education candidates in Ohio over the weekend.

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