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As Florida continues to consider the draft of a new set of state science standards, there are reports about mounting creationist lobbying against the inclusion of evolution and for the inclusion of creationism. Writing in the *Miami Herald* (December 9, 2007), Fred Grimm [summarized](#) [4]: "For the past 11 years, the biology curriculum in Florida schools has ignored the one great organizing principle of biological science. Darwin's theory was blackballed ... If not exactly storming into the 21st century, at least the new standards signal that we're, well, evolving intellectually. Or so it seemed until last week, when board member Donna Callaway, a former middle school principal from Leon County, said she opposed this Godless evolution stuff."

According to the *St. Petersburg Times* (December 6, 2007), Callaway, a member of the state board of education, [told](#) [5] a Baptist newspaper that she planned to vote against the standards, saying that evolution "should not be taught to the exclusion of other theories of origins of life" and expressing her hope for prayers over the issue: "I want God to be part of this." The newspaper was unable to obtain comment from most of the rest of the members of the state board of education; Roberto Martinez, however, said that he favored the standards, commenting, "I respect the people who have beliefs in creationism and intelligent design, but I do not believe it should be included as part of the science standards."

A later report on the *Times's* education blog (December 11, 2007) [described](#) [6] board member Linda Taylor as "generally supportive of the 'choices' philosophy, so long as it falls within what the state can do legally." She was quoted as saying, "With the evolution, there's a bigger topic called theories of origin. I think kids should have the opportunity to compare different theories ... If we are focused on evolution I am OK with that. But they should at least know there are other theories out there and that they could themselves compare them or that they be presented to them. I would support teaching evolution, but

with all its warts. I think that some of the facts have been questioned by evolutionists themselves. I would want them taught as theories."

A scant two days later after its report on Callaway, the *St. Petersburg Times* (December 8, 2007) [revealed](#) [7] that there was opposition to the treatment of evolution in the draft standards within the state department of education itself: "Selena 'Charlie' Carraway, program manager for the department's Office of Instructional Materials, recently used her personal e-mail on personal time to send a missive urging fellow Christians to fight the proposal to include evolution as a "key idea" in the science curriculum. But she invoked her position as a way to, in her words, 'give this e-mail credibility.' And that, it turns out, is a no-no." A spokesperson for the department told the newspaper, "It is inappropriate for any department employee to use their public position to advocate their personal positions."

Unlike [Chris Comer](#) [8] in Texas, Carraway was "counseled" by the human resources department and warned not to abuse her position again. NCSE's executive director Eugenie C. Scott commented, "Now she has a second chance, and hopefully she'll behave more responsibly," and Florida Citizens for Science's Joe Wolf concurred, saying, "I think she's allowing her religious beliefs to interfere with her public duty," adding, "I wish she hadn't done it. But I think it's an internal matter." A forceful editorial in the *St. Petersburg Times* (December 10, 2007) disagreed, [contending](#) [9], "Firing would be more in order" for Carraway, and calling on Donna Callaway to resign from her position on the state board of education.

In addition to the individual statements of Callaway and Carraway, the *St. Petersburg Times* reported that Focus on the Family was rallying its supporters to weigh in ("to include intelligent design in science classes"); that a state representative who is likely to become Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives in 2011, Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel), expressed reluctance at the idea of presenting evolution "from just one perspective"; and that "[t]he Polk County School Board has stated it might allow alternatives to evolution to be in its schools," referring to earlier reports (such as the *Lakeland Ledger's* [story](#) [10] from November 20, 2007) that a majority of its members support teaching "intelligent design" in addition to evolution.

In response to the mounting creationist pressure on the board, [Florida Citizens for Science](#) [11] launched its [All I Want for Christmas is a Good Science Education](#) [12] campaign, calling on supporters of the integrity of science education to send holiday cards to the members of the Florida state board of education: "This project will demonstrate that there are as many, if not more, people in Florida who support good science education as there are people against it. We want to tell them that we don't want our state to become the laughingstock of the nation like other states were in past years when confronted with similar situations." A [list](#) [13] of further actions is also provided.

The current version of the state science standards, dating from 1999, received a grade of F in the Fordham Foundation's report *The State of State Science Standards 2005*, which [described](#) [14] them as "sorely lacking in content." Two of the authors of the report have expressed approval of the new draft, however. Paul R. Gross reviewed the draft at the request of the *St. Petersburg Times* (November 30, 2007), which quoted him as [saying](#) [15], "Clearly, the writing committee, whoever they are, have taken to heart all the arguments that have been made about lousy standards," adding, "The organization of the plan is entirely respectable, and it pays attention to all the national models ... There's not a lot of fluff in it."

Similarly, Lawrence S. Lerner was asked by NCSE and Florida Citizens for Science to review the draft. In a [press release](#) [16] dated December 3, 2007, Lerner said, "This draft is a giant step in the right direction ...

It is clear, comprehensive, and most importantly, accurate." He estimated that, evaluated by the same standards of the Fordham Foundation's report, the standards would receive a high B, adding, "With a little bit of extra effort, Florida could bring that up to an A." Brandon Haught of Florida Citizens for Science commented, "Accurate and honest science education is critical to our state's future. ... These improved standards will give teachers a vital resource as they prepare the doctors, scientists, and citizens of the 21st century."

In Lerner's assessment, the draft standards received a grade of A for their treatment of evolution in particular. NCSE's Joshua Rosenau explained, "Evolution is the central organizing principle of modern biology. Cutting-edge work in biology, medicine, computer science, and even geology and astronomy requires a clear understanding of evolution. Adopting these improved standards will mean that Florida students will be better prepared to make life-saving and life-enhancing breakthrough discoveries, to make the best use of those new discoveries as they arise, and to maintain Florida's standing in an ever more competitive world."

The period of public [comment](#) [17] on the draft science standards expires on December 14, 2007. So far, the Associated Press (December 8, 2007) [reported](#) [18] **[Link broken]**, over 8000 people have commented. The writing committee will then revise the draft and send the result to the Florida Board of Education for its consideration in February 2008. NCSE's Joshua Rosenau, who was in Kansas during its latest battle over the place of evolution in the state science standards there, [told](#) [19] Wired News (December 10, 2007), "My fear is that Florida will do something like happened in Kansas a couple years ago, with the Board of Education overruling the decisions made by the expert committee appointed to draft the new standards."

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