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Two identical antievolution bills were introduced in the New Mexico legislature recently: [House Bill 506](#) [4], introduced by W. C. "Dub" Williams (R-District 56), and [Senate Bill 371](#) [5], introduced by Steve Komadina (R-District 9). If enacted, these bills would require the state department of education to adopt rules to "give teachers the right and freedom, when a theory of biological origins is taught, to objectively inform students of scientific information relevant to the strengths and weaknesses of that theory and protect teachers from reassignment, termination, discipline or other discrimination for doing so; and ... encourage students to critically analyze scientific information, give them the right and freedom to reach their own conclusions about biological origins and provide that no student shall be penalized in any way because the student subscribes to a particular position on biological origins." The bills further specify, "Scientific information" does not include information derived from religious or philosophical writings, beliefs or doctrines. Scientific information may have religious or philosophical implications and still be scientific in nature."

Also introduced in the legislature were two related antievolution memorials: [House Joint Memorial 14](#) [6], introduced by Representative Williams, and [Senate Joint Memorial 9](#) [7], introduced by Senator Komadina. A memorial, according to the New Mexico legislature's website, is "[a] formal expression of legislative desire, usually addressed to another governmental body, in the form of a petition or declaration of intent. A memorial does not have the force of law." A joint memorial is a memorial adopted by both houses of the legislature. HJM 14 and SJM 9 are addressed to the state department of education, in effect asking it to comply with the requirements of HB 506 and SB 371; unlike them, however, they offer a rationale, including the claims "teaching some aspects of evolutionary theory causes controversy;" "scientific theories of biological origins have implications that can challenge or support the personal religious or philosophical beliefs of students and their parents; "most parents favor allowing teachers to discuss both the strengths and weaknesses of evolutionary theory when biological origins are taught; and "many

credentialed scientists challenge certain aspects of evolutionary theory."

The *Albuquerque Journal* (January 30, 2007) [reported](#) [8] that during hearings before the House Judiciary Committee on HJR 14, Williams was candid about his religious beliefs: "However we evolved, we're here. What we evolved from we will never figure out," Williams said. "There are many people who are absolutely convinced God did all of this and if you have the faith I have, God did it all." The committee voted 7-4 along party lines to table the bill; at The Panda's Thumb blog, Dave Thomas [reported](#) [9], "Indeed, several teachers testified against the bills yesterday, just as teachers in Dover and Rio Rancho opposed similarly-worded policies. Not one proponent of the resolution showed up to defend it." Thomas (past president of the New Mexico Academy of Science) also observed, "New Mexico's scientific community is actively opposing these measures, charging that they are totally unnecessary additions to our excellent state science standards." According to the *Albuquerque Journal*, "Lawmakers said Monday's vote was a signal that the effort to inject intelligent design teaching into classrooms wouldn't get far." The current legislative session ends on March 17, 2007.

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[9] [http://www.pandasthumb.org/archives/2007/01/creationism\\_mea.html](http://www.pandasthumb.org/archives/2007/01/creationism_mea.html)

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