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The constitutionality of Tennessee's [Senate Resolution 17](#) [4] -- which, if enacted, would request the commissioner of education to justify the fact that creationism is not taught in the state's public schools -- is under scrutiny. The Associated Press (March 1, 2007) [reported](#) [5] **[Link broken]** that Senator Shea Flinn (D-District 30) asked the state's attorney general to investigate whether the bill would violate the United States constitution as well as the Tennessee constitution, which bans religious tests for public office holders. "The resolution in question requests our commissioner of the Department of Education to opine 'conclusively' on the origin of our universe and the existence of a Supreme Being," Flinn wrote in his request to the attorney general.

Further reports about the bill confirm the intentions of its sponsor, Senator Raymond Finney (R-District 8). According to the Associated Press (March 2, 2007), Finney, a retired physician, "wants the department to say there's no scientific proof for the theory of evolution and to let schools teach creationism or intelligent design"; he was [quoted](#) [6] as saying, "We've hunted for almost 150 years and not found supporting evidence," adding, "let's don't teach something that's not supported by evidence as truth, as the only idea." The Associated Press added, "Scientists consider evolution a well-established theory. A federal judge barred the Dover, Pa., school system from teaching intelligent design, saying it was religion masquerading as science."

Meanwhile, the *Bristol Herald Courier* (March 1, 2007) [offered](#) [7] **[Link broken]** its editorial opinion: "Finney is playing coy, but his true intent is obvious. He wants students in the state's public science classrooms taught Biblical creationism or its kissing cousin, intelligent design, along with evolution. This is the so-called 'teach the controversy' approach that creationists have adopted in an effort to make an end run around court rulings that prevent overt instruction in creationism in public schools." The editorial concluded, "The state education commissioner isn't in the business of answering theological questions."

Senators should reject the resolution and maintain the separation between church and state. Vote no."

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