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## [Louisiana governor signs creationist bill](#) [3]

Louisiana's Governor Bobby Jindal signed [Senate Bill 733](#) [4] (PDF) into law, 27 years after the state passed its Balance Treatment for Evolution-Science and Creation-Science Act, a law overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1987. Jindal's approval of the bill was buried in a press release [issued](#) [5] on June 25, 2008, announcing 75 bills he signed in recent days. *Houma Today* [reports](#) [6] (June 27, 2008) that the bill "will empower educators to pull religious beliefs into topics like evolution, cloning and global warming by introducing supplemental materials."

Bill Barrow of the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* [broke the story](#) [7] on June 27, 2008, observing that "Gov. Bobby Jindal attracted national attention and strongly worded advice about how he should deal with the Louisiana Science Education Act," and that he "ignored those calling for a veto and this week signed the law that will allow local school boards to approve supplemental materials for public school science classes as they discuss evolution, cloning and global warming." While Jindal did not return media calls for comment, Barrow reports that "Jindal issued a brief statement that read in part: 'I will continue to consistently support the ability of school boards and BESE to make the best decisions to ensure a quality education for our children.'"

Local teachers are concerned that the bill could open the door to creationism. As the *Lafayette Daily Advertiser* [put it](#) [8] on June 26, 2008, "The possibility of the introduction of 'wacko' theories of the origins of life Carencro High School science teacher Warren Sensat." Sensat told *The Advertiser*, "When you open the door to bring in unapproved curriculum, you can bring in some wacko stuff." Other teachers are less worried. Tim Tate, a science curriculum supervisor for the Lafayette Parish schools told *The Advertiser* "he's not worried about teachers using inappropriate materials. He expects teachers to only focus on the state curriculum, but acknowledges that different ideas will always be brought into the classroom."

Ars Technica's John Timmer [points out](#) [9] (June 27, 2008), however, that "most observers are expecting the passage of the LSEA by the state to unleash a series of Dover-style cases, as various local boards attempt to discover the edges of what's constitutionally allowable." Timmer cites a letter from Alan Leshner, CEO of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, who told Jindal that the bill would "provoke an expensive, divisive legal fight." The American Institute for Biological Science and a coalition of 8 scientific societies also [called on](#) [10] Jindal to veto the bill, pointing out (June 20, 2008) that "If SB 733 is signed into law, Louisiana will undoubtedly be thrust into the national spotlight as a state that pursues politics over science and education." Timmer also quoted comments by Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry, who vetoed similar legislation, suggesting it would end up "subjecting [school officials] to an explosion of costly and protracted litigation that would have to be defended at taxpayers' expense." Timmer argues that, "In essence, Jindal is inviting local school boards to partake in that explosion without committing the state to paying the inevitable costs. In the meantime, the students of the state will be subjected to an 'anything goes' approach to science — if it looks scientific to a school board, it can appear in the classroom."

Conservative columnist John Derbyshire echoed these fears, [writing](#) [11] "The entire effect of this law ... will be that one cartload of Louisiana taxpayers' money will go to the Discovery Institute for their mendacious 'textbooks,' then another cartload will go into the pockets of lawyers to defend the inevitable challenge to the law in federal courts, which will inevitably be successful, as they always are, and should be."

Feeding such concerns, bill supporter David Tate, a member of the Livingston Parish School Board, [told the New Orleans Times-Picayune](#) [12] (April 18, 2008), "I believe that both sides -- the creationism side and the evolution side -- should be presented and let students decide what they believe," adding that the bill is needed because "teachers are scared to talk about" creationism. LifeSiteNews, a news service "dedicated to issues of culture, life, and family" [reported](#) [13] (June 27, 2008) that "Louisiana public school teachers can now educate their students about the theory of intelligent design," a practice ruled unconstitutional in 2005's *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*.

The *Times-Picayune* noted on June 26 that "The bill enjoyed support from the Louisiana Family Forum, a group that is upfront in its push for more religious expressions in the public sphere." The bill's sponsor, Senator Ben Nevers (D-Bogalusa), [told the Hammond Daily Star](#) [14] (April 6, 2008) that the LFF drafted the bill and "believe[s] that scientific data related to creationism should be discussed."

Discovery Institute vice-president John West insisted that the bill would not be used for such purposes. "This bill is not a license to propagandize against something they don't like in science," West told the *Times-Picayune*. "Someone who uses materials to inject religion into the classroom is not only violating the Constitution, they are violating the bill."

[Speaking](#) [15] to WWL-TV, Louisiana ACLU Executive Director Marjorie Esman was less sanguine. "I think there's a lot of room for things to get sneaked into the classrooms that shouldn't be there," she said.

Barbara Forrest, an NCSE board member and member of Louisiana Coalition for Science [echoed](#) [16] **[Link broken]** the concern in an interview with the Associated Press (June 27, 2008), worrying that school boards would "permit any teacher to put any type of creationist supplement into a classroom and use it until they get caught." The Louisiana Citizens for Science website [thanked supporters](#) [17] "in keeping with our southern tradition of good manners," but noted that "We intend to hold [supporters of the bill] to [their] public assertions that no creationist materials will be used in our children's science classes and

that no religious concepts will be presented to our children as science."

Bill opponents say that they are ready to take action should such problems arise. "We're known for suing school boards when we need to do so and we won't shy away from doing that if that's what we need to do this case," the ACLU's Esman told WWL-TV. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State [took a firm stance](#) [18] in a press release (June 27, 2008): "Let me state clearly and upfront that any attempts to use this law to sneak religion into public schools through the back door will not be tolerated. ... I call on all concerned residents of Louisiana to help us make sure that public schools educate, not indoctrinate."

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[8] <http://www.theadvertiser.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080626/NEWS01/806260311>

[9] <http://arstechnica.com/news.ars/post/20080627-louisiana-passes-first-antievolution-academic-freedom-law.html>

[10] [http://www.aibs.org/position-statements/20080620\\_joint\\_statement.html](http://www.aibs.org/position-statements/20080620_joint_statement.html)

[11] <http://corner.nationalreview.com/post/?q=YjM2ODY1N2E1NGZkYTJiNDEyYWMzMWQzYTQzYWYxODU=>

[12] [http://www.nola.com/news/index.ssf/2008/04/panel\\_oks\\_bill\\_on\\_science\\_text.html](http://www.nola.com/news/index.ssf/2008/04/panel_oks_bill_on_science_text.html)

[13] <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2008/jun/08062706.html>

[14] [http://www.hammondstar.com/articles/2008/04/06/top\\_stories/9327.txt](http://www.hammondstar.com/articles/2008/04/06/top_stories/9327.txt)

[15] <http://www.wwltv.com/local/stories/wwl062408tpscienceact.37767059.html>

[16] <http://www.nola.com/newsflash/index.ssf?/base/news-40/121459256184230.xml&storylist=louisiana>

[17] <http://lasciencecoalition.org/2008/06/27/thank-you-from-lcfs/>

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