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Louisiana creationism bill is on Governor's desk

On June 16, 2008, the Louisiana Senate approved Senate Bill 733 as amended by the state House of Representatives. If Governor Bobby Jindal signs the bill or does not veto the bill within 20 days, it will become law.

Will Sentell of *The (Baton Rouge) Advocate* [reported](#) [4] (June 17, 2008) "Opponents, mostly outside the State Capitol, contend the legislation would inject creationism and other religious themes into public schools. However, the Senate voted 36-0 without debate to go along with the same version of the proposal that the House passed last week 94-3."

Bill supporter Gene Mills, executive director of the Louisiana Family Forum, defended the bill, telling *The Advocate's* Sentell: "It provides assurances to both teachers and students that academic inquiries are welcome and appropriate in the science classroom." Sentell explains that the bill "would allow science teachers to use supplemental materials, in addition to state-issued textbooks, on issues like evolution, global warming and human cloning. The aim of such materials, the bill says, is to promote 'critical thinking skills, logical analysis and open and objective discussion of scientific theories being studied,' including evolution." Bill sponsor Sen. Ben Nevers (D-Bogalusa) explained: "I just believe that it is important that supplemental scientific information be able to be brought into the school system."

Bill opponents worry that the bill will bring other things into the schools. The Rev. Barry Lynn told *The Advocate* that the bill "is clearly designed to smuggle religion into the science classroom, and that's unwise and unconstitutional." In an open letter to Governor Jindal posted on its website, Louisiana Coalition for Science [called on](#) [5] the Governor to veto the bill, calling SB 733 "a thinly disguised attempt to advance the 'Wedge Strategy' of the Discovery Institute (DI), a creationist think tank that is

collaborating with the LA Family Forum to get intelligent design (ID) creationism into LA public school science classes."

In a press release [announcing](#) [6] the LCFS open letter to Governor Jindal, one of Governor Jindal's college professors lent his voice to the same press release. Professor Arthur Landy is University Professor at Brown University, and taught Jindal genetics. He reminded Jindal that "Without evolution, modern biology, including medicine and biotechnology, wouldn't make sense. In order for today's students in Louisiana to succeed in college and beyond, in order for them to take the fullest advantages of all that the 21st century will offer, they need a solid grounding in genetics and evolution. Governor Jindal was a good student in my class when he was thinking about becoming a doctor, and I hope he doesn't do anything that would hold back the next generation of Louisiana's doctors." NCSE board member Barbara Forrest added, "Governor Jindal surely knows that evolution is not controversial in the mainstream scientific community. He majored in biology at Brown University, and he belongs to a church that considers evolution to be established science and approves of its being taught in its own parochial schools. The LA Family Forum is pushing this bill over the objections of scientists and teachers across the state. The governor has a moral responsibility to Louisiana children to veto this bill."

In an appearance on CBS's *Face the Nation* on June 15, 2008, Jindal did not commit to signing the bill nor to vetoing it. Host Chris Reid asked Jindal about his views on intelligent design, and Jindal [replied](#) [7] ([PDF transcript](#) [8]), "I don't think this is something the federal or state government should be imposing its views on local school districts. ... I think local school boards should be in a position of deciding the curricula and also deciding what students should be learning. ... I don't think students learn by us withholding information from them. Some want only to teach intelligent design, some only want to teach evolution. I think both views are wrong, as a parent." Pressed about his personal views on the matter, Jindal added, "when my kids go to schools, when they go to public schools, I want them to be presented with the best thinking. I want them to be able to make decisions for themselves. I want them to see the best data. I personally think that the life, human life and the world we live in wasn't created accidentally. I do think that there's a creator. I'm a Christian. I do think that God played a role in creating not only earth, but mankind. Now, the way that he did it, I'd certainly want my kids to be exposed to the very best science. I don't want them to be--I don't want any facts or theories or explanations to be withheld from them because of political correctness. The way we're going to have smart, intelligent kids is exposing them to the very best science and let them not only decide, but also let them contribute to that body of knowledge. That's what makes the scientific process so exciting. You get to go there and find facts and data and test what's come before you and challenge those theories."

The Center for American Progress reacted to Jindal's statements by [noting](#) [9] that Jindal's position "effectively giv[es] school boards carte blanche to teach scientifically inaccurate ideas, just like Kansas did in 2005, when it rewrote standards to cast doubt on evolution."

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