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[House Bill 6027](#) [4], introduced in the Michigan House of Representatives on April 30, 2008, and referred to the House Committee on Education, is the very latest so-called "academic freedom" bill aimed at undermining the teaching of evolution, joining similar bills currently under consideration in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Missouri. Contending that "the teaching of some scientific subjects, such as biological evolution, the chemical origins of life, human impact of climate change, and human cloning, can cause controversy and that some teachers may be unsure of the expectations concerning how they should present information on such subjects," the bill proposes to "provide clarification in these matters."

The bill, if enacted, would require state and local administrators "to create an environment within public elementary and secondary schools that encourages pupils to explore scientific questions, learn about scientific evidence, develop critical thinking skills, and respond appropriately and respectfully to differences of opinion about controversial issues" and "to assist teachers to find more effective ways to present the science curriculum in instances where that curriculum addresses scientific controversies" by allowing them "to help pupils understand, analyze, critique, and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of existing scientific theories pertinent to the course being taught."

Reacting to a previous antievolution [bill](#) [5] introduced by the lead sponsor of HB 6027, John Moolenaar (R-District 98), the [Michigan Science Teachers Association](#) [6] [commented](#) [7], "A legislative mandate that includes only evolution and global warming in such an evaluation may suggest to students and the public that these theories are somehow less robust or less scientific than are other scientific theories that were not selected for mandatory evaluation, e.g., plate tectonics, atomic theory, cell theory, relativity. Such inference would be in clear contrast to the preponderance of scientific evidence supporting both of these theories and would represent a dishonest and unprofessional approach to the sciences and science

education in Michigan."

A further section of HB 6027 attempts to immunize it against constitutional scrutiny: "This section only protects the teaching of scientific information, and this section shall not be construed to promote any religious or nonreligious doctrine, promote discrimination for or against a particular set of religious beliefs or nonbeliefs, or promote discrimination for or against religion or nonreligion." Significantly, however, Moolenaar previously cosponsored a [bill](#) [8] that would have encouraged the teaching of "the design hypothesis as an explanation for the origin and diversity of life" in public school science classes, as well as a previous [bill](#) [9] that would have amended the state science standards to refer to "the theory that life is the result of the purposeful, intelligent design of a Creator."

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