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When the Missouri legislative session ended on May 16, 2008, [House Bill 2554](#) [4] died, although it was passed by the House Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education on April 30, 2008. If enacted, the bill would have called on state and local education administrators to "endeavor to create an environment within public elementary and secondary schools that encourages students to explore scientific questions, learn about scientific evidence, develop critical thinking skills, and respond appropriately and respectfully to differences of opinion about controversial issues, including such subjects as the teaching of biological and chemical evolution," and to "endeavor to assist teachers to find more effective ways to present the science curriculum where it addresses scientific controversies." "Toward this end," it continued, "teachers shall be permitted to help students understand, analyze, critique, and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of theories of biological and chemical evolution."

The intent and likely effect of HB 2554 was not lost on the editorialist for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (April 27, 2008), who [commented](#) [5] (in the course of marveling at the latest confirmation of the dinosaurian ancestry of birds), "Once again this year, a bill has been introduced in the Legislature that would encourage students to question evolution. House Bill 2554, sponsored by Rep. Robert Wayne Cooper, R-Camdenton, claims to support academic freedom for teachers, and to help students 'develop critical thinking skills.' Those are the latest fig leaves used by creationists in their long war against science and evolution." In previous legislative sessions, Cooper sponsored a total of three antievolution bills: HB 911 and HB 1722, calling for equal time for "intelligent design" in Missouri's public schools, in 2004, and HB 1266, calling for "critical analysis" of any "theory or hypothesis of biological origins," in 2006. All three of these bills died, although HB 1266, like HB 2554, was passed by the House Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education.

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