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## [Creationist teacher sued in Ohio](#) [3]

A complaint filed in federal court on June 13, 2008, accuses John Freshwater, a Mount Vernon, Ohio, teacher, of inappropriately bringing his religion into school -- including by posting posters with the Ten Commandments and Bible verses in his classroom, branding crosses into the arms of his students with a high-voltage electrical device, and teaching creationism. The complaint also alleges that the principal of the school, the superintendent of the school district, and the board of education allowed Freshwater to continue teaching and failed to discipline him, even after the branding incident (which occurred in December 2007) was brought to their attention. The attorney representing the complainants (who are identified only as "John Doe and Jane Doe") [told](#) [4] the *Columbus Dispatch* (June 20, 2008), "These concerns had been going on for at least 11 years, and the school had not done anything."

According to the conclusions of a [report](#) [5] (PDF) on Freshwater commissioned by the district and dated June 19, 2008, "Mr. Freshwater engaged in teaching of a religious nature, teaching creationism and related theories and calling evolution into question. He had other materials in his classroom that could be used for that purpose." Investigators found various creationist literature in his classroom, including Jonathan Sarfati's *Refuting Evolution* and Jonathan Wells's [Icons of Evolution](#) [6]. Additionally, high school teachers in the same district complained that they had to "re-teach" concepts related to evolution that Freshwater misrepresented: one commented, "At the ninth grade level when we bring up evolution there is challenge and argumentation from students who have had Mr. Freshwater, bordering on hostility." And the principal of the high school specifically asked for her daughter not to be assigned to Freshwater's class.

A lawyer for the Mount Vernon City School District [told](#) [7] the *Dispatch* (June 19, 2008) that the administration directed Freshwater not to discuss his religious beliefs in class: "They told him he was to teach -- not preach." He added that Freshwater could not have been disciplined before the completion of

the investigation; the board of education is expected to review the report and decide what action, if any, to take on June 20, 2008. The *Dispatch* (June 20, 2008) reported, "Neither Freshwater nor his attorney, Roger Weaver, could be reached for comment last night. Freshwater's friend Dave Daubenmire defended him. 'With the exception of the cross-burning episode. ... I believe John Freshwater is teaching the values of the parents in the Mount Vernon school district,' he said." Daubenmire previously [acknowledged](#) [8] to the *Dispatch* (April 17, 2008) that Freshwater taught "intelligent design" in his classroom.

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[4] [http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/local\\_news/stories/2008/06/19/mtvernon.html?sid=101](http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2008/06/19/mtvernon.html?sid=101)

[5] [http://www.dispatch.com/wwwexportcontent/sites/dispatch/local\\_news/stories/2008/06/19/Freshwater.pdf](http://www.dispatch.com/wwwexportcontent/sites/dispatch/local_news/stories/2008/06/19/Freshwater.pdf)

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[8] [http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/local\\_news/stories/2008/04/17/bibleteacher.ART\\_ART\\_04-17-08\\_B1\\_689V0PQ.html](http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2008/04/17/bibleteacher.ART_ART_04-17-08_B1_689V0PQ.html)

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