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[Senate Bill 1386](#) [4], introduced in the South Carolina Senate on May 15, 2008, and referred to the Senate Committee on Education, is the newest so-called "academic freedom" bill aimed at undermining the teaching of evolution, joining similar bills currently under consideration in Louisiana, Michigan, and Missouri. Similar bills in Florida and Alabama died when the legislative session in those states ended. The South Carolina bill contends that "[t]he teaching of biological and chemical evolution can cause controversy, and some teachers may be uncertain of administrative expectations concerning the presentation of material on these scientific topics" and that "public school educators must be supported in finding effective ways to present controversial science curriculum and must be permitted to help students understand, analyze, critique, and review the scientific strengths and weaknesses of theories of biological and chemical evolution in an objective manner."

Accordingly, S. 1386 would, if enacted, amend the state's education code to provide: "The State Board of Education, superintendents of public school districts, and public school administrators may not prohibit a teacher in a public school of this State from helping his students understand, analyze, critique, and review the scientific strengths and weaknesses of biological and chemical evolution in an objective manner. This act does not condone the promotion of religious or nonreligious doctrine, the promotion of discrimination for or against a particular set of religious beliefs or nonreligious beliefs, or the promotion of discrimination for or against religion or nonreligion. By no later than September 1, 2008, the State Department of Education shall notify district superintendents of the provisions of this act, and each superintendent shall then disseminate to all employees within his district a copy of the provisions of this act."

The lead sponsor of S. 1386, Senator Michael Fair (R-District 6), spearheaded a number of previous antievolution efforts in the legislature. In 2003, he tried to amend a bill dealing with instructional materials and textbooks to require a disclaimer about the origin of life as "not scientifically verifiable";

withdrawing the amendment, he then successfully amended the bill to establish a nineteen-member South Carolina Standards Committee to "(1) study science standards regarding the teaching of the origin of species; (2) determine whether there is a consensus on the definition of science; (3) determine whether alternatives to evolution as the origin of species should be offered in schools." The *Greenville News* (May 1, 2003), reported that Fair "said his intention is to show that Intelligent Design is a viable scientific alternative that should be taught in the public schools." The bill died, however, when the legislature adjourned.

Fair was quickly at it again, however, introducing a bill in the next legislative session that would have established the South Carolina Standards Committee. The language about "alternatives to evolution" was removed from the bill in committee, however. Regrouping, Fair then introduced S. 909, a bill modeled on the so-called Santorum language stripped from the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. If enacted, S. 909 would have required, "Where topics are taught that may generate controversy, such as biological evolution, the curriculum should help students to understand the full range of scientific views that exist, why such topics may generate controversy, and how scientific discoveries can profoundly affect society." The bill failed, but Fair won himself a description as "the dominant voice advocating for S.C. schools to teach more than Charles Darwin's theories of evolution," according to *The State* (June 17, 2005).

In 2005, Fair also launched a campaign against the treatment of evolution in the state's science standards. As a member of the state's Education Oversight Committee, he pressed for the expansion of "critical analysis" language already present in the standards dealing with evolution, despite the criticism of then State Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum, who told *The State* (February 13, 2006), "'Critically analyze' is not just wordsmithing ... It carries with it a whole campaign against evolution." After a seven-month delay during which Fair and his confederates unsuccessfully lobbied for insertion of "critical analysis" language into all of the evolution indicators, the EOC approved the standard as submitted. But even here Fair claimed victory, telling AgapePress (June 15, 2006) that it was a precursor to allowing the teaching of "intelligent design" in South Carolina's public schools.

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