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A new coalition of Texas scientists voiced its opposition to attempts to dilute the treatment of evolution in Texas's state science standards, which are presently undergoing revision. At a news conference in Austin on September 30, 2008, representatives of the [21st Century Science Coalition](#) [4] challenged the idea that students should be told that there are "weaknesses" in evolution. Armed with a stack of scientific journals, Dan Bolnick, who teaches biology at the University of Texas, Austin, explained, "Not a single one [of the articles in these journals] gives us reason to believe evolution did not occur," the *Austin American-Statesman* (October 1, 2008) [reported](#) [5]. "So where are the weaknesses? Simple: They don't exist. They are not based on scientific research or data and have been refuted countless times."

The Texas Education Agency released proposed drafts of the state's science standards on September 22, 2008. A requirement in the current standards for high school biology that reads "The student is expected to analyze, review, and critique scientific explanations, including hypotheses and theories, as to their strengths and weaknesses using scientific evidence and information" was replaced with "The student is expected to analyze and evaluate scientific explanations using empirical evidence, logical reasoning, and experimental and observational testing." The change is significant because in 2003, the "strengths and weaknesses" language in the Texas state science standards was selectively applied by members of the state board of education attempting to dilute the treatment of evolution in the biology textbooks then under consideration.

The chair of the state board of education, avowed creationist Don McLeroy, favors the "strengths and weaknesses" language, [telling](#) [6] the *Austin American-Statesman* (September 23, 2008), "I'd argue it

doesn't make sense scientifically to take it out." The 21st Century Science Coalition organized and mobilized in response. Already over 800 Texas scientists with or working towards advanced degrees in life, physical, and mathematical science have signed the coalition's [statement](#) [7] calling on the board to approve science standards that "acknowledge that instruction on evolution is vital to understanding all the biological sciences" and that "encourage valid critical thinking and scientific reasoning by leaving out all references to 'strengths and weaknesses,' which politicians have used to introduce supernatural explanations into science courses."

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