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10.22.2008

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"The State Board of Education's decisions in the coming months will affect both the college preparation and future job qualifications of our children. Our students deserve a sound education that includes the latest findings of scientific research and excludes ideas that have failed to stand up to scientific scrutiny." That was the message of the 21st Century Science Coalition's advisory committee -- Daniel I. Bolnick, R. E. Duhrkopf, David M. Hillis, Ben Pierce, and Sahotra Sarkar -- delivered in twin op-eds recently published in two Texas newspapers, the [Waco Tribune](#) [4] (October 19, 2008), and the [Austin American-Statesman](#) [5] (October 21, 2008).

In their op-eds, after describing the vast amount of scientific research that supports evolution, and the absence of any compelling evidence against it, Bolnick and his colleagues respond to the charge of censorship: "Evolution opponents who promote such phony 'weaknesses' claim we are trying to censor them, suppressing free speech. But the entire point of education is to provide students with the best information available, without wasting time on bogus arguments. We don't teach alchemy alongside chemistry, for example, or astrology alongside physics. We don't ask students to decide for themselves whether Earth revolves around the Sun or vice versa. Is that 'censorship'?"

They also emphasize the increasing economic importance of evolution education, writing, "We can't expect future citizens of Texas to be successful in a 21st-century world with a 19th-century science education. Once our children enter the work force, they will find that understanding evolution is central to many innovations in medicine, agriculture, engineering and biotechnology. Undermining biology education risks driving away biotechnology and other industries from our state." The *Austin American-*

Statesman (October 6, 2008) already editorially agreed, [noting](#) [6] that biomedical industries "have not looked favorably on communities that water down science studies with vague and unproven ideas."

The [21st Century Science Coalition](#) [7] was organized to resist attempts of creationists to maintain the "strengths and weaknesses" language in the Texas state science standards, which are currently undergoing revisions. Already over 1300 Texas scientists with or working towards advanced degrees in life, physical, and mathematical science have signed the coalition's statement calling on the state board of education 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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