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[House Bill 300](#) [4], introduced in the Alabama House of Representatives on February 3, 2009, by David Grimes (R-District 73) and referred to the House Education Policy Committee, is the latest in a string of "academic freedom" bills aimed at undermining the teaching of evolution. Previous such bills in [Alabama](#) [5] -- HB 923 (which Grimes also sponsored) in 2008; HB 106 and SB 45 in 2006; HB 352, SB 240, and HB 716 in 2005; HB 391 and SB 336 in 2004 -- failed to win passage. In 2004, a cosponsor of SB 336 told the *Montgomery Advertiser* (February 18, 2004), "This bill will level the playing field because it allows a teacher to bring forward the biblical creation story of humankind." The text of HB 300 as introduced follows.

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BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. This law shall be known as the "Academic Freedom Act."

Section 2. The Legislature finds that existing law does not expressly protect the right of teachers identified by the United States Supreme Court in *Edwards v. Aguillard* to present scientific critiques of prevailing scientific theories. The Legislature further finds that existing law does not expressly protect the right of students to hold a position on views. It is the intent of the Legislature that this act expressly protects those rights.

Section 3. Every K-12 public school teacher or teacher or instructor in any two-year or four-year public institution of higher education, or in any graduate or adult program thereof, in the State of Alabama, shall have the affirmative right and freedom to present scientific information pertaining to the full range of scientific views in any curricula or course of learning.

Section 4. No K-12 public school teacher or teacher or instructor in any two-year or four-year public institution of higher education, or in any graduate or adult program thereof, in the State of Alabama, shall be terminated, disciplined, denied tenure, or otherwise discriminated against for presenting scientific information pertaining to the full range of scientific views in any curricula or course of learning, provided, with respect to K-12 teachers, the Alabama Course of Study for Science has been taught as appropriate to the grade and subject assignment.

Section 5. Students may be evaluated based upon their understanding of course materials, but no student in any public school or institution of higher education, shall be penalized in any way because he or she may subscribe to a particular position on any views.

Section 6. The rights and privileges contained in this act apply when topics are taught that may generate controversy, such as biological or chemical origins. Nothing in this act shall be construed as requiring or encouraging any change in the state curriculum standards in K-12 public schools, nor shall any provision of this act be construed as prescribing the curricular content of any course in any two-year or four-year public institution of higher education in the state.

Section 7. Nothing in this act shall be construed as protecting as scientific any view that lacks published empirical or observational support or that has been soundly refuted by empirical or observational science in published scientific debate. Likewise, the protection provided by this act shall not be restricted by any metaphysical or religious implications of a view, so long as the views are defensible from and justified by empirical science and observation of the natural world.

Section 8. Nothing in this act shall be construed as promoting any religious doctrine, promoting discrimination for or against a particular set of religious beliefs, or promoting discrimination for or against religion or non-religion.

Section 9. This act shall become effective on the first day of the third month following its passage and approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.

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