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As the final vote on the proposed revision of the Texas state science standards approaches, the *Austin American-Statesman* (March 8, 2009) [offers](#) [4] a profile of the chair of the Texas state board of education, avowed creationist Don McLeroy. Describing his conversion to fundamentalism as a dental student, the profile explained, "He is now a young earth creationist, meaning that he believes God created Earth between 6,000 and 10,000 years ago," quoting him as saying, "When I became a Christian, it was whole-hearted ... I was totally convinced the biblical principles were right, and I was totally convinced that it could be accurate scientifically." Particularly important to McLeroy is the biblical tenet that humans were created in the image of God — although Sid Hall, a Methodist pastor in Austin, told the newspaper, "I would never want to discount those works, but to take [the passage that humans were made in the image of God] to mean something about how the universe is created is a stretch to me ... That's code to me for 'I'm going to take my particular myth of creationism and make it part of the science curriculum.' That's scary to me."

At the board's January 21-23, 2009, meeting, McLeroy successfully [proposed](#) [5] a revision to section 7 of the draft of the high school biology standards to require that students "analyze and evaluate the sufficiency or insufficiency of common ancestry to explain the sudden appearance, stasis and sequential nature of groups in the fossil record." As NCSE explains in its [call](#) [6] to Texas scientists, the requirement is not only unworkable and confusing, but also evidently intended to promote the idea that living things were specially created in their current forms. Moreover, a detailed analysis by the Stand Up for Real Science blog strongly [suggests](#) [7] that the documentation that McLeroy provided in support of his

revision at the January meeting was in fact taken wholesale from creationist sources. Undaunted, McLeroy told the *American-Statesman* that at the board's March 25-27, 2009, meeting, he plans to "pitch another idea that he says should be taught in public schools: the insufficiency of natural selection to explain the complexity of cells" — apparently a reference to the "intelligent design" notion of "irreducible complexity" due to Michael Behe.

David Hillis of the University of Texas, Austin, told the newspaper, "McLeroy's amendments are not even intelligible. I wonder if perhaps he wants the standards to be confusing so that he can open the door to attacking mainstream biology textbooks and arguing for the addition of creationist and other religious literature into the science classroom." He added, "If Chairman McLeroy is successful in adding his amendments, it will be a huge embarrassment to Texas, a setback for science education and a terrible precedent for the state boards overriding academic experts in order to further their personal religious or political agendas. The victims will be the schoolchildren of Texas, who represent the future of our state." Hillis is also a member of the Advisory Committee of the [21st Century Science Coalition](#) [8], which has recruited over 1400 Texas scientists to endorse its call for the Texas state board of education to adopt state science standards that "acknowledge that instruction on evolution is vital to understanding all the biological sciences" and omit "all references to 'strengths and weaknesses,' which politicians have used to introduce supernatural explanations into science courses."

Preparing for the March 25-27 board meeting at which the final vote on the standards is expected, McLeroy is arming himself with "a large binder that is adorned on the front with a picture of Albert Einstein" and contains "numerous passages from books — such as [Kenneth R.] Miller's and others on evolutionary theory — and articles that he plans to use as ammunition in the fight this month over what should be in the state's science standards." One page from his binder, the *American-Statesman* reports, shows a diagram of the fossil record from a book by Miller, with McLeroy's gloss, "What do we see?" 'Sudden appearance' of species." Miller — a professor of biology at Brown University and a Supporter of NCSE, who recently [received](#) [9] the Award for Public Understanding of Science and Technology by the American Association for the Advancement of Science in recognition of "his sustained efforts and excellence in communicating evolutionary science" — told the newspaper, "That diagram shows evolution. If he thinks it says evolution does not occur, he is dead wrong. It's really quite the opposite."

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