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When the Missouri legislative session ended on May 15, 2009, [House Bill 656](#) [4] died, without ever having been assigned to a committee. If enacted, HB 656 would have required state and local education administrators to permit teachers to "to help students understand, analyze, critique, and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of theories of biological and chemical evolution." Otherwise a typical instance of the current spate of antievolution "academic freedom" bills, HB 656 was interestingly expansive about what it was not intended to do: "this section shall not be construed to promote philosophical naturalism or biblical theology, promote natural cause or intelligent cause, promote undirected change or purposeful design, promote atheistic or theistic belief, promote discrimination for or against a particular set of religious beliefs or ideas, or promote discrimination for or against religion or nonreligion. Scientific information includes physical evidence and logical inferences based upon evidence."

The chief sponsor of HB 656 was Robert Wayne Cooper (R-District 155), joined by Mike Sutherland (R-District 99), Ed Emery (R-District 126), Therese Sander (R-District 22), Brian Nieves (R-District 98), and Stanley Cox (R-District 118). Cooper was the sponsor of numerous failed antievolution bills in the past. In 2008, he introduced the similar HB 2554. In 2006, he introduced HB 1266, which if enacted would have required that "If a theory or hypothesis of biological origins is taught, a critical analysis of such theory or hypothesis shall be taught in a substantive amount." In 2004, he introduced two bills, HB 911 and HB 1722, that called for equal time for "intelligent design" in Missouri's public schools. HB 911 moreover contained idiosyncratic definitions of various scientific and philosophical terms as well as the draconian

provision, "Willful neglect of any elementary or secondary school superintendent, principal, or teacher to observe and carry out the requirements of this section shall be cause for termination of his or her contract."

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