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[Senate Bill 758](#) [4] (document), the so-called Oklahoma Science Education Act, which would have undermined the integrity of science education in the Sooner State, is dead. February 25, 2013, was the deadline for Senate bills to pass their committees, but the Senate Education Committee adjourned its February 25, 2013, meeting without considering it. Still active in the Oklahoma legislature is [House Bill 1674](#) [5] (document), styled the Scientific Education and Academic Freedom Act, which differs from SB 758 primarily in mentioning "biological evolution, the chemical origins of life, global warming, and human cloning" as supposedly controversial topics. HB 1674 passed the House Education Committee on a 9-8 vote on February 19, 2013.

As usual in Oklahoma, resistance to the antievolution bills was spearheaded by the grassroots organization [Oklahomans for Excellence in Science Education](#) [6], whose board of governors includes a former member of NCSE's board of directors, Frank J. Sonleitner, and a recipient of NCSE's Friend of Darwin award, Victor H. Hutchison. "OESE has been a model of effective advocacy for supporting good science education," commented NCSE's executive director Eugenie C. Scott. "Unlike evolution and climate change, cloning isn't something that NCSE is really interested in," she joked, "but we might make an exception if we could clone people like Vic and Frank and all of the hardworking and vigilant folks they work with in Oklahoma."

SB 758 would, if enacted, have required state and local educational authorities to "assist teachers to find more effective ways to present the science curriculum where it addresses scientific controversies" and permitted teachers to "help students understand, analyze, critique, and review in an objective manner

the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of existing scientific theories pertinent to the course being taught." Unusually but not uniquely, no scientific topics were specifically identified as controversial, but the fact that the sole sponsor of SB 758 was Josh Brecheen (R-District 6), who introduced specifically antievolution legislation in the two previous legislative sessions, is telling.

In late 2010, Brecheen [announced](#) [7] his intention to file antievolution legislation in a column in the *Durant Daily Democrat* (December 19, 2010): "Renowned scientists now asserting that evolution is laden with errors are being ignored. ... Using your tax dollars to teach the unknown, without disclosing the entire scientific findings[,] is incomplete and unacceptable." In a subsequent column in the newspaper (December 24, 2010), he indicated that his intention was to have creationism presented as scientifically credible, [writing](#) [7], "I have introduced legislation requiring every publically funded Oklahoma school to teach the debate of creation vs. evolution using the known science, even that which conflicts with Darwin's religion."

What Brecheen in fact introduced in 2011, Senate Bill 554, combined a version of the now familiar "academic freedom" language — referring to "the scientific strengths [and] scientific weaknesses of controversial topics ... [which] include but are not limited to biological origins of life and biological evolution" — with a directive for the state board of education to adopt "standards and curricula" that echo the flawed portions of the state science standards adopted in Texas in 2009 with respect to the nature of science and evolution. SB 554 died in committee. In 2012, Brecheen took a new tack with Senate Bill 1742, modeled in part on the so-called Louisiana Science Education Act; SB 1742 likewise died in committee.

With SB 758, Brecheen seemed to be following the lead of Tennessee's "monkey law" (as it was nicknamed by House Speaker Emeritus Jimmy Naifeh), enacted (as Tenn. Code Ann. 49-6-1030) over the protests of the state's scientific and educational communities in 2012. The major difference is that SB 758 omitted the monkey law's statement of legislative findings, which cites "biological evolution, the chemical origins of life, global warming, and human cloning" as among the topics that "can cause controversy" when taught in the science classroom of the public schools. The history of Brecheen's legislative efforts clearly demonstrates that it is evolution which was primarily the target of the new bill, however.

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[6] <http://www.oklascience.org/>

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