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## [Texas Creationists Beware: The Posse's Comin'](#) [14]

After last month's Texas textbook vote, [I was ready to declare total victory](#) [15]. I wrote:

It's a joy to be able to report on a sweeping victory for science education in Texas, and to be able to give an eyewitness report of the fight over the textbooks that will be used in that massive textbook market for years to come.

But there was a shoe left to drop, a panel that the board would appoint to review a disputed list of purported errors in the Pearson/Prentice-Hall *Biology* textbook written by Ken Miller and Joe Levine. As [New York Times reporter Motoko Rich explained](#) [16]:

The Texas Board of Education on Friday delayed final approval of a widely used biology textbook because of concerns raised by one reviewer that it presents evolution as fact rather than theory. ...

the state board, which includes several members who hold creationist views, voted to recommend 14 textbooks in biology and environmental science. But its approval of “Biology,” a highly regarded textbook by Kenneth R. Miller, a biologist at Brown University, and Joseph S. Levine, a science journalist, and published by Pearson Education, was contingent upon an expert panel determining whether any corrections are warranted. Until the panel rules on the alleged errors, Pearson will not be able to market its book as approved by the board to school districts in Texas.

Three board members got to name the review panel members: Chairwoman Barbara Cargill, a committed creationist; Sue Melton-Malone, a new Republican board member from Waco who was seen as a possible swing vote on textbooks; and Martha Dominguez, a new Democratic member from El Paso who [tried to drop out of the race last year](#) [17] and was seen as an opponent of creationism in textbooks.

There was always the possibility that this group of three would manage to name a panel of reviewers who would not back the publisher against complaints raised by creationist Ide Trotter.

Now we know that won't be a problem. The panel members have been chosen: Ron Wetherington, an anthropology professor from Southern Methodist University and a winner of 2010's Friend of Darwin award for his work on the Texas science standards, named by Sue Melton-Malone (you can see him dismissing the attacks on the Miller and Levine above); Arturo De Lozanne, a cell biology professor from UT Austin who was a forceful defender of evolution in the 2009 standards fight and this textbook battle, named by Martha Dominguez (there's video above of him standing up for science at a rally before September's board of education meeting); and Vincent Cassone, a chronobiologist from the University of Kentucky, named by chairwoman Cargill.

We had expected Cargill's nominee, at least, to be a dyed-in-the-wool creationist. It'd be tricky for her to find one from Texas: all reviewers had to have PhDs in a relevant field and had to have no part in the original review, which would have narrowed the field substantially on the creationist side. But here's what Cassone, chair of the UK biology department, [said last year about a creationist bill in the state legislature](#) [18]:

The theory of evolution is the fundamental backbone of all biological research. ... There is more evidence for evolution than there is for the theory of gravity, than the idea that things are made up of atoms, or Einstein's theory of relativity. It is the finest scientific theory ever devised.

And in 2005, Cassone (then at Texas A&M) debated ID creationist Michael Behe. As you can see in the video above, Cassone had no problem seeing through the scientifically preposterous claims advanced in the name of “intelligent design.”

These are not the sorts of things I'd expect Ms. Cargill's nominee to be saying, and I'm glad of that.

These are all real experts, and as I told *The Times's* Motoko Rich, it'll take about 5 minutes for them to dismiss the claims leveled against Pearson's *Biology*. With these three folks reviewing their best-selling textbook, I think Ken Miller and Joe Levine have nothing to fear. And, if the board continues this trend of relying on real expertise, neither (at long last) will the students and teachers of Texas have anything to fear when they open a new textbook.

Update: As I was writing this, [TFN's Dan Quinn was writing this](#) [19]. As he says, "Boom."

[+ read](#) [14]

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