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Two bills introduced in the Florida legislature — [House Bill 899](#) [4] and [Senate Bill 1018](#) [5] — are ostensibly aimed at empowering taxpayers to object to the use of specific instructional materials in the public schools, for example on the grounds that they fail to provide "a noninflammatory, objective, and balanced viewpoint on issues." There is reason to believe that evolution and climate change are among the targets.

[According](#) [6] to the *Naples Daily News* (December 22, 2015), "The identical bills are the work of the Florida Citizens' Alliance and Better Collier County Public Schools." Both organizations are opposed to the Common Core standards for English language arts and mathematics and have been feuding with the Collier County School Board over the curricula and textbooks used in the district, especially with regard to history.

Florida Citizens' Alliance's website complains of a world history textbook that in it "Darwin's conclusions [are] presented as fact and the biblical theory as ludicrous ... [it] states as fact millions of species exist and fossil records document changes over time. ... while the biblical explanation claims all species created by God on the same day," and of an American history textbook that it is "permeate[d]" by "discussion of climate change."

Currently, Florida parents unhappy with instructional materials are entitled to complain to their local school board, whose decision is final. HB 899 and SB 1018, if enacted, would allow any taxpayer to

complain to the local school board, and moreover allow them to appeal a negative result to a circuit court to seek damages and/or injunctive relief; the prevailing party in such a case would be entitled to reasonable attorney fees and costs.

A further provision of the bills is also of concern. Currently, instructional materials used in Florida's schools must be consistent with the state science standards. HB 899 and SB 1018 would allow that instructional materials may be alternatively be consistent with "standards that are equivalent to or better than the applicable state standards." No criteria for assessing the relative quality of standards are provided.

Florida Citizens' Alliance's website recently posted a list of "Examples of Acceptable/Proven K-12 Standards and Corresponding Curriculum," which includes a link to something called Freedom Project Education Classical Judeo-Christian Online Academy, whose high school biology classes refer to "the Creator God" and use a creationist textbook (Exploring Creation with Biology, second edition).

The sponsor of SB 1018 is Alan Hays (R-District 11), who, while serving in the Florida House of Representatives, introduced HB 1483 in 2008. As introduced, the bill was a version of the so-called academic freedom act; Hays later substituted a one-line version calling on public schools to provide "[a] thorough presentation and critical analysis of the scientific theory of evolution." HB 1483 was eventually tabled.

SB 1018 was filed on December 2, 2015, and referred to the appropriations and education committees and the appropriations subcommittee on education. HB 899, sponsored by Ray Pilon (R-District 72), was filed on December 8, 2015, and referred to the education committee and the education K-12 and appropriations subcommittees. [Florida Citizens for Science](#) [7] ([blog](#) [8]) is monitoring the bills with concern.

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