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[Senate Bill 393](#) [4] (PDF), styled the Oklahoma Science Education Act, is the latest antievolution bill in the Sooner State. SB 393 would, if enacted, in effect encourage science teachers with idiosyncratic opinions to teach anything they pleased — proponents of creationism and climate change denial are the usual intended beneficiaries of such bills — and discourage responsible educational authorities from intervening. No scientific topics are specifically identified as controversial, but the fact that the sole sponsor of SB 393 is Josh Brecheen (R-District 6), who introduced similar legislation that directly targeted evolution in previous legislative sessions, is suggestive.

SB 393 would require state and local educational authorities to "assist teachers to find effective ways to present the science curriculum as it addresses scientific controversies" and permit teachers to "help students understand, analyze, critique and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of existing scientific theories covered in the course being taught"; it would prevent such authorities from "prohibit[ing] any teacher in a public school district in this state from helping students understand, analyze, critique and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and weaknesses of existing scientific theories covered in the course being taught."

In late 2010, Brecheen announced his intention to file antievolution legislation 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 later column in the newspaper (December 24, 2010), he

indicated that his intention was to have creationism presented as scientifically credible, writing, "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.

In 2013, Brecheen modified his approach again. Senate Bill 758 followed 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 bill died in the Senate Education Committee.

The failure of SB 758 notwithstanding, Brecheen persisted. In 2014, he introduced the virtually identical SB 1765. Like SB 758, it died in the Senate Education Committee, but not before eliciting opposition from the American Institute of Biological Sciences, which [described](#) [5] the bill as "bad for science and bad for science education," and the National Association of Biology Teachers, which [warned](#) [6] that it "could easily permit non-science based discussions of 'strengths and weaknesses' to take place in science classrooms, confusing students about the nature of science." In 2015 and 2016, he introduced the virtually identical SB 655 and SB 1322, respectively; both died in the Senate Education Committee.

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