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"Parents and educators worry that legislation advancing in the South Dakota Legislature would open the floodgates for teachers to present nearly any topic as science," [according](#) [4] to the Sioux Falls *Argus-Leader* (January 27, 2017), referring to South Dakota's [Senate Bill 55](#) [5], which passed the Senate on January 25, 2017.

Deb Wolf, a high school science coach with the Sioux Falls School District, told the newspaper, "let's say I believe in eugenics ... [SB 55] says that I couldn't be prohibited, I couldn't be stopped from teaching that as long as I did it in an objective scientific manner, and it doesn't specify what that means."

Ann Lewis, special projects director at the South Dakota Discovery Center in Pierre, pointed to a different problem with the bill: the phrase "strengths and weaknesses," she argued, is "just meant to undermine whatever it is you're talking about." She expanded on her point in a letter [published](#) [6] in the *Capital Journal* (January 27, 2017).

Jarod Larson, superintendent of the Brandon Valley School District, told the *Argus-Leader* that he was concerned about the bill's removing districts' ability to oversee teachers. "It appears as though this opens the door for whatever you want," Larson said. "Versus the framework and the standards that are provided for our teachers."

Before SB 55 passed the Senate, the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota issued a strong

statement (January 23, 2017) opposing it, [saying](#) [7] in part, "the best way to instill critical thinking skills in our students is by implementing and following the science curriculum, which is already geared toward this very aim and has been written and tested by qualified educational specialists."

Meanwhile, the bill attracted national attention, with *The Hill* (January 27, 2017) [taking note](#) [8] of it and similar bills in Indiana and Oklahoma, and tracing the development of antiscience bills in South Dakota from the 2014 measure that would have specifically allowed teachers to present "intelligent design" to the present bill, SB 55.

And the American Institute of Biological Sciences, in a January 26, 2017, [letter](#) [9] (PDF) to leaders in the South Dakota House of Representatives, slammed SB 55 as "bad for science, science education, and the future economic health and well-being of South Dakota," predicting "needless controversy, or even litigation" if the bill is enacted.

Similarly, the National Science Teachers Association alerted its local members about SB 55, [writing](#) [10], "South Dakota students need the kind of preparation that provides them with the tools and skills necessary to succeed in college and careers. Opening the door to teach non-science ideas in the science classroom will do them a disservice."

And the National Council Against Censorship [opined](#) [11] on its blog (January 27, 2017), "[C]urricular decisions should be made by educational experts ... Rather than protecting free inquiry, the bill would simply allow teachers to deviate from approved curricula, at the expense of high quality education."

Subsequently, in a January 28, 2017, [letter](#) [12] (PDF) to each member of the South Dakota House of Representatives, the National Association of Biology Teachers urged rejection of SB 55, warning that the bill would "contradict and diminish" the role of science and the accountability of teachers in South Dakota's science classrooms.

And in a February 1, 2017, [letter](#) [13] (PDF) to leaders in the South Dakota House of Representatives, the National Association of Geoscience Teachers also urged rejection of SB 55, observing that the bill "threatens to make South Dakota's students unprepared for college coursework and for careers that depend upon solid understandings of science, mathematics, and technology."

[Updated January 27, 2017, by the addition of the fifth paragraph and the ninth paragraph; updated January 30, 2017, by the addition of the tenth paragraph; updated February 2, 2017, by the addition of the last paragraph.]

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