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A pair of bills introduced in the Florida legislature — [House Bill 989](#) [4] and [Senate Bill 1210](#) [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.

In 2016, two similar bills — House Bill 899 and Senate Bill 1018 — were under consideration. These were backed by two organizations, the Florida Citizens' Alliance and Better Collier County Public Schools, unhappy with the curricula and textbooks used in the public schools in Collier County, Florida. Among the causes of their unhappiness, as NCSE previously [reported](#) [6], was the inclusion of evolution and 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 in 2016 would have allowed any taxpayer to complain to the local school board, and moreover allow the appeal of a negative result to a circuit court to seek damages and/or injunctive relief. HB 989 and SB 1210 in 2017 would allow any taxpayer to complain, but not allow a further appeal.

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 989 and SB 1210, like their

predecessors, 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 features a list of "Examples of Acceptable/Proven K-12 Standards and Corresponding Curriculum," which includes a link to something called Freedom Project Academy (previously 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).

Filed on February 23, 2017, HB 989 is sponsored by Byron Donalds (R-District 80). Filed on February 24, 2017, SB 1210 is sponsored by Tom Lee (R-District 20) and Debbie Mayfield (R-District 17). [Florida Citizens for Science](#) [7] is monitoring the bills with concern, [describing](#) [8] the "non-inflammatory, objective, and balanced" language as "a potential back door for inserting creationism and climate change doubts into the classroom."

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