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Glenn Branch [2]
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New science standards in Louisiana [3]

Louisiana's state board of elementary and secondary education voted to adopt a new set of state science standards on March 8, 2017, according [4] to the Baton Rouge *Advocate* (March 8, 2017) — but not without a nod in the general direction of creationism.

At a meeting of a committee of the board held on March 7, 2017, testimony and discussion centered on the treatment of evolution in the standards, according [5] to the Associated Press (March 7, 2017). After critics complained that no alternatives to evolution were included in the standards, the committee voted 7-2 to add a reference to the so-called Louisiana Science Education Act. Thus amended, the standards were unanimously approved.

As NCSE previously reported, the LSEA, passed and enacted in 2008, calls on state and local administrators to help to promote "critical thinking skills, logical analysis, and open and objective discussion of scientific theories being studied including, but not limited to, evolution, the origins of life, global warming, and human cloning"; these four topics were described as controversial in the original draft of the legislation.

The LSEA also allows teachers to use "supplemental textbooks and other instructional materials to help students understand, analyze, critique, and review scientific theories in an objective manner" if so permitted by their local school boards. Writing in Slate in 2015, Zack Kopplin presented [6] evidence that the LSEA was invoked by Louisiana school districts as justification for using creationist material in their

classrooms.

Beyond the explicit reference to evolution, the links between the LSEA and creationism are abundantly clear. For instance, a sponsor of the bill told [7] the *Hammond Daily Star* (April 6, 2008) that the bill was aimed at promoting the discussion of "scientific data related to creationism," and Louisiana's governor Bobby Jindal told [8] (at about 9:00) NBC News in 2013 that the LSEA permits the teaching of creationism.

The effort, led by Zack Kopplin, to repeal the LSEA have been endorsed by a host of scientific and science education organizations, including the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the National Association of Biology Teachers,the American Institute for Biological Sciences, the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and the American Society for Cell Biology.

The *Advocate* reports that the new standards will take effect in the 2018-2019 school year, with the 2017-2018 school year serving as a transitional period for teacher training and field testing. It remains to be seen what, if any, effect the mention of the LSEA will have.

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