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The two bills aimed at empowering taxpayers to object to the use of specific instructional materials in the public schools — whose supporters have evolution and climate change in their sights — progressed in the Florida legislature.

[Senate Bill 1210](#) [4] passed the Senate Education Committee on a 9-0 vote on March 27, 2017, while [House Bill 989](#) [5] passed the PreK-12 Quality Subcommittee of the House Education Committee on a 14-0 vote on March 27, 2017.

Both bills were amended in committee before they passed, eliminating two worrisome provisions (involving eligibility to file a complaint and consistency of instructional materials with the state science standards).

But in a March 27, 2017, blog post, Brandon Haught of Florida Citizens for Science [emphasized](#) [6] that passage of the bills even as amended would threaten to inundate local school boards with scientifically unfounded attacks on climate change and evolution.

To demonstrate his point, Haught cited affidavits submitted in support of the bills that complained, e.g., "I have witnessed students being taught evolution as a fact ... rather than a theory ... I have witnessed children being taught that Global Warming is a reality."

Eric Otto, a parent in Collier County, Florida, [told](#) [7] the *Tampa Bay Times* (March 28, 2017), that these affidavits reveal "the intent of HB 989/SB 1210 — to allow ideological, activist citizens to dictate public school curricula according to their political standards."

A further provision remaining in the bills would ensure that the attacks would continue. Presently, a school board's decision on challenged instructional materials is final, not subject to further petition or review.

Previous versions of the bills (HB 899 and SB 1018 in 2016) would have allowed the appeal of a negative result to a circuit court to seek damages and/or injunctive relief. The present bills allow no such appeal, but also rescind the finality of the school board's decision.

Michelle Groenings, a parent in Collier County, Florida, told the *Tampa Bay Times* that as a result, "The process of approving instructional materials would be an insurmountable task, as materials will be challenged repeatedly, regardless of outcome."

Florida Citizens for Science's Brandon Haught, writing in the *Daytona Beach News-Journal* (March 29, 2017), summed the situation up by [commenting](#) [8], "These dangerous bills need to be disarmed before they cause catastrophic havoc in our schools."

Both bills still await further committee votes. Senate Bill 1210 remains to be heard by the Senate Appropriations Committee, while House Bill 989 remains to be heard by the PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee and the House Education Committee itself.

[Updated March 29, 2017, with the addition of the next-to-last paragraph.]

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