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Oklahoma's [Senate Bill 393](#) [4] (PDF), which would empower science denial in the classroom, was passed on a 4-3 vote by the House General Government Oversight and Accountability Committee on April 13, 2017. The bill will presumably proceed to the floor of the House for consideration.

SB 393 would allow science teachers to teach anything they pleased, while preventing responsible educational authorities from intervening. No scientific topics are identified as controversial, but the main sponsor is Josh Brecheen (R-District 6), who introduced similar legislation that directly targeted evolution in previous legislative sessions.

SB 393 was passed on a 34-10 vote by the Senate on March 22, 2017, after which it was expected to move to the House Common Education Committee. That committee, however, never scheduled a hearing for the bill, and its sponsors withdrew it and submitted it to the General Government Oversight and Accountability Committee instead.

[Speaking](#) [5] to E&E News (April 13, 2017) before the vote, NCSE's Glenn Branch speculated that Governor Mary Fallin might veto the bill even if it passes the House. In 2014, Fallin approved a new set of state science standards that acknowledge that human activity contributes to climate change "by modifying the chemical makeup of the atmosphere."

"One of the objections to the bill is it would mean that the Oklahoma government is giving mixed signals

to parents and teachers and students in that they have science standards that include evolution and climate change," Branch observed. If the bill were passed, Oklahoma would be "freeing up their teachers to present material at odds with those standards."

Speaking against the bill at the committee hearing were Aysha Prather of Oklahomans for Excellence in Science Education, Deborah Hill of the Oklahoma Science Teachers Association, Beth Allan, a biology professor at the University of Central Oklahoma, and Theresa Goughenour of Climate Parents.

The sole person at the hearing to speak on behalf of the bill aside from its House sponsor David Brumbaugh (R-District 76) confirmed the suspicions of those opposed to the bill by emphasizing that its passage would enable teachers to present material supposedly challenging "neo-Darwinism" and climate change.

Committee members voting for SB 393 were George Faught (R-District 4), Kevin McDugle (R-District 12), Kevin Calvey (R-District 82), and Jason Murphey (R-District 31). Members voting against the bill were Cyndi Munson (D-District 85), Roger Ford (R-District 95), and Greg Babinec (R-District 33). Johnny Tadlock (D-District 1) was absent.

Among the state-level organizations opposing the bill are the Oklahoma Science Teachers Association, the Oklahoma State School Boards Association, the Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration, the Oklahoma chapter of the Sierra Club, and the grassroots pro-science-education group Oklahomans for Excellence in Science Education.

Among the national organizations opposing the bill are the National Science Teachers Association, the National Association of Biology Teachers, the National Association of Geoscience Teachers, the National Coalition Against Censorship, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

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