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Glenn Branch [2]
09.19.2017

# Shenanigans in New Mexico [3]

"New Mexico's Public Education Department unveiled proposed teaching standards ... that critics say would omit references to evolution, rising global temperatures and the age of Earth from the state's science curriculum," reports [4] the *Albuquerque Journal* (September 16, 2017).

The new standards are modeled on the Next Generation Science Standards, which have been adopted by eighteen states and the District of Columbia so far. But, as *Mother Jones* (September 15, 2017) observed [5], "the draft released by New Mexico's education officials changes the language of a number of NGSS guidelines, downplaying the rise in global temperatures, striking references to human activity as the primary cause of climate change, and cutting one mention of evolution while weakening others."

"These changes are evidently intended to placate creationists and climate change deniers," NCSE's deputy director Glenn Branch told *Mother Jones*, and would, if implemented, "dumb down New Mexico's science education." Kim Johnson, a physicist and former president of the New Mexico Academy of Science, and Stephanie Ly, president of the American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, were quoted by the *Albuquerque Journal* as agreeing, Ly describing the proposed standards as a "perverted, watered-down vision" of the NGSS.

A subsequent report in the *Santa Fe New Mexican* (September 19, 2017) quoted [6] the superintendent of the Santa Fe schools and the K-12 program director for the Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation (a non-profit organization that supports New Mexican science teachers) as opposed to the proposed

standards, as well as NCSE's Glenn Branch, who reiterated that the divergences between the NGSS and the proposed standards "water down the treatment of evolution and the [human] impact [on] climate change."

The Associated Press (September 19, 2017) also covered the story. Ellen Loehman of the New Mexico Science Teachers' Association commented [7], "Our position is that the Public Education Department has injected politics into science"; the NMSTA is urging the department to adopt the NGSS without the objectionable changes. Also quoted as opposing the proposed standards was the director of the Rio Grande chapter of the Sierra Club. The department, according to the Associated Press, declined to explain the rationale for the divergences between the NGSS and the proposed standards.

There is still time for concerned New Mexicans to protest. The Public Education Department will be accepting public comments on the standards through October 16, 2017, and then will hold a public hearing in Santa Fe.

[*Updated September 20, 2017, by the addition of the fourth and fifth paragraphs.*]

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