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Opposition to the new state science standards proposed in New Mexico — which omit references to evolution, human responsibility for climate change, and the age of the earth — is coming fast and furious.

As NCSE previously reported, the proposed standards are modeled on the performance expectations of 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](#) [4], "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."

Observing that "it is essential in a modern science curriculum for students to explore science concepts in an open manner, including human impact on climate change, age of the earth, and evolution," the Los Alamos School Board recommended adoption of the NGSS with the addition of certain New-Mexico-specific standards rather than the proposed standards, [according](#) [5] to the *Los Alamos Daily Post* (October 3, 2017). Similarly, the Santa Fe School Board unanimously voted to recommend the adoption of the NGSS, [according](#) [6] to the *Santa Fe New Mexican* (October 3, 2017).

The Santa Fe School Board went further by agreeing to stage a teach-in at the Public Education Department in Santa Fe on October 13, 2017. Applauding the idea, the *Santa Fe New Mexican* (October

3, 2017) [editorialized](#) [7], "Public outcry against these so-called standards has been loud and nearly unanimous in opposition. That's a good thing, because these standards are not up to snuff. State bureaucrats, especially new Public Education Department Secretary Christopher Ruskowski, should stop by the teach-in. They could stand to learn a few things."

Meanwhile, the *Santa Fe New Mexican* (October 3, 2017) [reported](#) [8] that it was unable to ascertain the source of the divergences of the proposed standards from the NGSS: "it remains unclear which individuals and groups participated in the development of the teaching standards. Secretary Christopher Ruskowski declined to name them, saying only that the process for drafting the proposal is 'how PED does business.'" The newspaper's public records request elicited only the response "There are no documents in the custody or control of the PED that appear responsive to this request."

Whatever the source of the divergences, the New Mexico Science Teachers' Association expressed its opposition to the proposed standards in a letter dated October 3, 2017. The NMSTA [objected](#) [9] (PDF) to the changes regarding "the topics of evolution, earth history and climate change," arguing, "the proposed changes inject political opinions that do not represent the consensus of scientists worldwide," as well as to the omission of all of the NGSS except for the performance expectations. The organization recommended the adoption of the entire NGSS unedited instead.

The Environmental Education Association of New Mexico, while not appearing yet to have issued a statement as to its position, recently conducted a series of meetings to solicit public input on the proposed standards, [according](#) [10] to the *Santa Fe New Mexican* (October 4, 2017), at which "[c]omments ... echoed much of the negative feedback that has been aimed at the Public Education Department since it posted the proposed new standards on its website last month. Critics accuse the state of watering down such scientific concepts as evolution and human-caused factors affecting climate change."

Previously, the National Education Association — New Mexico, representing about half of the teachers in the state, issued a statement (posted by the *Los Alamos Daily Post*, September 20, 2017), [calling](#) [11] for the adoption of "the entirety of the Next Gen standards ... not the version proposed by the P.E.D.,] which substitutes non-scientific notions where science should be taught." The statement continued, "we shouldn't confuse political debates about responding to climate change with misleading debates about whether climate and evolutionary science is valid and should be included in standards for science education in our state."

Likewise, in a September 28, 2017, letter, the LANL Foundation, which supports education in northern New Mexico, similarly [objected](#) [12] to the modifications in the proposed standards that "contravene the principles of inquiry science, primarily in three content areas: evolution, the age of the earth, and man-made climate change" as well as to the omission of all of the NGSS except for the performance expectations and to the inclusion of additional, New-Mexico-specific, standards. Like the NMSTA, the foundation recommended the adoption of the entire NGSS unedited instead.

Joining the NMSTA were two national organizations of science teachers. In a letter dated September 22, 2017, the National Science Teachers Association [expressed](#) [13] (PDF) its opposition to the changes to the NGSS, described as intended "to advance a political view," and recommended that "only science should be taught in science classrooms." And in a letter dated October 2, 2017, the National Association of Biology Teachers [objected](#) [14] (PDF) to "key alterations to select standards" that seemed like "an attempt to inject political influence into the curriculum."

As NCSE previously [reported](#) [15], the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, the *Las Cruces Sun-News*, and the

Albuquerque Journal have all editorially condemned the proposed standards — the *Journal* memorably describing them as "fly[ing] in the face of accepted science" and "breathtaking in their offensiveness" — as have New Mexico's senators Tom Udall (D) and Martin Heinrich (D), and two state representatives, G. Andrés Romero (D-District 10) and Bill McCamley (D-District 53), who introduced legislation that would have required New Mexico to adopt the NGSS and who blame the flaws in the proposed new standards on Governor Susana Martinez.

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

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