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When Idaho's House Education Committee held hearings on a new set of proposed science standards on February 1 and 2, 2018, it was expected to make a recommendation. But despite hearing from twenty-eight testifiers, all in favor of adoption, the committee failed to recommend approval of the standards. And several members of the committee objected to passages involving climate change and evolution.

It was the third year in a row that proposed science standards encountered resistance from the legislature. In 2016, the standards were rejected as a whole — ostensibly because of a lack of opportunity for public comment, but, as NCSE previously [reported](#) [4], there was reason to think that hostility toward the inclusion of evolution and climate change in the standards was behind the decision to reject the new standards.

In 2017, when the standards were resubmitted for the legislature's approval, the House Education Committee removed five passages referring to climate change and human impact on the environment before approving them, as NCSE previously [reported](#) [5]. Scott Syme (R-District 11) led the charge against the treatment of climate change in the new standards. The committee's removal and approval were subsequently ratified by the legislature.

Now under consideration is a new version of the standards, in which the five removed passages dealing with climate change and human impact on the environment have been replaced with versions that continue to acknowledge human responsibility for recent climate change, but appear to soften or qualify

the acknowledgment. The Idaho state board of education gave its approval to the standards in the summer of 2017.

At the February 2018 hearings, [according](#) [6] to the Spokane *Spokesman-Review* (February 1, 2018), Syme said "he's planning to propose the standards be approved with two sections removed — one of the five regarding climate change that lawmakers ordered removed last year, and one additional one." His proposal seems not yet to have materialized, however, and it is unclear which standards he finds objectionable.

Ron Mendive (R-District 3), meanwhile, was perplexed by a standard that referred to the formation of new species. According to the *Spokesman-Review*, Mendive asked, "Are new species being formed at this time?" and added, "As far as new species, natural selection just kind of modifies existing species, and actual speciation, new species, I'm still not aware of anything along those lines."

Among those testifying in favor of adopting the proposed standards were the chair of the committee that revised the standards, a high school junior who previously convinced the legislature to name the Idaho giant salamander the state amphibian, teachers from the state's public schools and scientists from the state's public universities, and the public and governmental affairs director for Monsanto, which employs over a thousand Idahoans.

The chair of the House Education Committee [told](#) [7] Idaho Education News (February 2, 2018) that the legislature would vote on the standards this session, although no vote is yet scheduled. [According](#) [8] to a later story in the *Spokesman-Review* (February 6, 2018), if the chambers of the legislature do not agree to reject all or part of the standards, they will become permanent.

In its editorial calling for the adoption of the standards, the *Twin Falls Times-News* (February 4, 2018) [urged](#) [9], "For a state government that's placing a lot of emphasis on STEM education — science, technology, engineering and math — refusing to accept scientific consensus, or, at the very least, teach our students the best science available, is nothing less than shooting ourselves in the foot and handicapping our children."

[Revised on February 7, 2018, by correcting and updating the second sentence of the next-to-last paragraph.]

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