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"School Superintendent Diane Douglas is apparently behind a rewrite of science standards for all Arizona school children that would delete references to evolution," [reports](#) [4] KPHX (May 18, 2018) in Phoenix.

As NCSE previously reported, staffers at the Arizona state department of education tampered with the treatment of evolution and allied topics in the standards. NCSE's deputy director Glenn Branch [told](#) [5] KNAU (May 14, 2018) in Flagstaff, "We can [be] quite sure, I think, that the revisions are aimed deliberately at softening the treatment of evolution, and thus misleading teachers and students about the scientific standing of evolution."

KPHX cited audio from a November 2017 Republican candidate forum in Tempe in which Douglas, who is seeking re-election, answered a question by saying, "Should the theory of intelligent design be taught along with the theory of evolution? Absolutely," adding, "I had a discussion with my staff, because we're currently working on science standards, to make sure this issue was addressed in the standards we're working on."

While "intelligent design" is not included in the draft science standards, the treatment of evolution was compromised by the department of education staffers. For example, where the writing committee's version of a standard for the eighth grade explained, "the process of natural selection provides an explanation of how new species can evolve," the revised version refers instead to "the processes by which a species may change over time in response to environmental conditions," thus avoiding both the e-word and the idea of speciation.

Writing in the *Arizona Republic* (May 21, 2018), Laurie Roberts [quoted](#) [6] NCSE's Glenn Branch as saying that even if the compromised standards are adopted, "Good teachers are still going to be presenting evolution as scientists understand it, as the unifying backbone of biological science." But, Roberts added, "By calling the scientific accuracy of evolution into question, Arizona's proposed standards will give teachers cover to bring religion into the classroom."

Roberts also observed that a reference to the Big Bang was deleted by the department of education staffers. She jokingly predicted that future revisions to the standards would tell Arizona's public school students "that the moon really is made of cheese, the seas are rising because of rocks that fall into the ocean, and yes, you really can fall off the end of the earth if you walk far enough. "

The draft standards are [available](#) [7] for public comment on-line until May 28, 2018. NCSE encourages Arizonans concerned about the integrity of science education in their state to review and comment; NCSE is [available](#) [8] to help.

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