



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 8, 2010

Louisiana School Board Rejects Creationism

Debates over the content of student textbooks continue to rage on in parts of the country, especially Louisiana, where a committee recently rejected requests to include references to creationism and intelligent design. The requests were to include such items in the same section in which evolution appears in the textbooks.

Fox News explains, "The committee of the state's Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted 6-1 to approve the new biology textbooks for public school students."



The textbooks await approval from the education board on Thursday but have garnered the support of a number of state education committees.

The debate over teaching creationism and evolution as scientific theories dates back to 1925, during the trial of [John T. Scopes](#), who was convicted of teaching evolution in Dayton, Tennessee. Scopes' teachings were in violation of the 1925 Butler Act, which criminalized the teaching of any theory that denied the existence of a Supreme Being. The law was eventually repealed in 1967, and soon, the teaching of evolution fully replaced any references to a Divine Creator.

However, creationists continue to assert that evolution is "a controversial theory." Tom Willis, director of the Creation Science Association for Mid-America, remarked, "When you tell students science has determined evolution to be true, you're deceiving them."

Critics of the Louisiana textbooks agree. Furthermore, they find the textbooks problematic as they do not articulate the scientific challenges to evolution, [of which there are many](#), and the science in the books is generally not up to date.

"We're disappointed by the decision of the board today to move to adopt recommendations of advisory committees," said Gene Mills, president of Louisiana Family Forum, a conservative Christian group that had taken a hard stance against the adoption of the new textbooks. "Textbook purchasers have scored another monopolized victory."

Similarly, John Oller, professor at the University of Louisiana, has indicated his disappointment. Addressing the debate over whether religious concepts should appear in the textbooks, Oller called it "a kind of war of ideas and a lot of misunderstanding, on perhaps both sides but especially on the side of the people trying to defend the status quo."

In addition to the absence of creationism from the textbooks, Oller bemoans the lack of updated scientific material.

"We're looking at outdated materials that have been copied from one year to the next. This review happens every 10 years, and I was part of last cycle of review. My beef there was if you compared these books that are supposed to be updated with books presented 10 years ago, they're almost the same



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verbatim.”

To the critics, however, the committees assert that there is no room for religion in science books.

Kevin Carman, dean of the LSU College of Science, explains, “There is no major research university in this country that teaches intelligent design or anything like that. It is simply not science. We need our textbooks to be focused on what is scientifically accurate and not religion.”

[Kansas](#) witnessed similar debates in 2005 when the scientists criticized the Kansas State Board of Education for relying too heavily upon the unproven reasoning found in Darwinian theory. The scientists asserted that there were far too many holes in the theory that point to the possibility of an unidentified “designing mind.”

The debate in Kansas sparked the now infamous Kansas Evolution Hearings in Topeka which lasted an entire week. The result was that the Kansas Education Board adopted the Critical Analysis of Evolution lesson plans which taught creationism and the controversy over evolutionary theory.

The victory was short-lived, however, as moderate Republicans and Democrats overturned the 2005 school science standards in 2007 and adopted those originally recommended by the State Board Science Hearing Committee by a vote of 6 to 4. The Board revised the definition of science to be limited once again to “the search for natural explanations for what is observed in the universe.”

In other areas of the country, conservatives continue to fight to see changes made to school textbooks. Just this year, the [Texas Board of Education](#) approved a social studies curriculum that adamantly defends American capitalism and stresses the positive impact of the Founding Fathers. The new standards won by a vote of 10 to 5.

In the area of science textbooks, however, lesser progress is evident as evolution continues to be touted as a fact rather than the theory it is.

In Louisiana, despite the vote approving the new biology textbooks, Mills remains hopeful that school districts will opt out of purchasing the new books, as the choice still remains with each individual school district.



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