



March 20, 2006

Senator Stratton Taylor
2300 N. Lincoln Blvd. Room 522
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105

Dear Senator Taylor:

On behalf of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the world's largest general scientific society and publisher of the journal *Science*, I urge you to oppose House Bill 2107, the "Academic Freedom Act." This bill would encourage the teaching of "Intelligent Design", thus misleading the students of Oklahoma about the nature of science and degrading the quality of their science education.

HB 2107 states that public school teachers should be able to teach "scientific information pertaining to the full range of scientific views on the biological or chemical origins of life." Although the language of HB 2107 may seem reasonable enough, such code words misrepresent the nature of the scientific process and the importance of evolution in the science curriculum. By singling out evolution, this language implies that it deserves special criticism. However, there is no more scientific justification for criticizing evolution than other scientific theories, such as the theory of gravity or the germ theory of disease. Evolution is one of the most robust and widely accepted principles of modern science, and is supported by extensive scientific evidence ranging from the fossil record to the genetic relationship between species.

HB 2107 also implies that there are there are alternative scientific views on the biological and chemical origins of life, but this is not the case. Supporters of "Intelligent Design" claim that their ideas are supported by scientific evidence, but there is no research or scientific publications to support this claim. As Judge John E. Jones III of the Middle District Court of Pennsylvania found, because ID relies on the existence of a supernatural designer it is a religious concept, not science, and therefore does not belong in the science classroom. Presenting it there would only serve to confuse our children about what is and is not science.

Unfortunately, the sponsors of these bills seem to believe that evolution and religion cannot coexist. AAAS, like the vast majority of individual scientists and religious leaders, sees no conflict between science and religion and recognizes that both pursuits play important roles in many people's lives.

The AAAS Board of Directors has expressed its deep concern about attempts to undermine the teaching of evolution by means such as the language proposed by HB 2107, and about the claim that Intelligent Design is science. Copies of the Board statements are enclosed.

To compete for jobs in today's global economy, Oklahoma's children need and deserve the best possible science education. And as President Bush made clear in his recent State of the Union Address, high quality education for all citizens is critical to the future security, economic vitality, and health and well-being of the United States. I urge you to protect the future of Oklahoma's children and oppose HB 2107.

Sincerely,

Alan I. Leshner, Chief Executive Officer

American Association for the Advancement of Science
1200 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005 USA
Tel: 202 326 6600 Fax: 202 289 4950
www.aaas.org