

MR. CHAIRMAN & MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

SENATE EDUCATION  
SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 8  
2-7-05  
818

My name is Victoria Clark. I am a supporter of Senate Joint Resolution No. 8. I and my family reside within the boundaries of the Darby School District. I have a daughter who currently attends the Darby Public Schools. I speak as an individual citizen. My roles in the community include local adult education coordinator and local church instructor. I am also the local coordinator for religious instruction at Darby's St. Philip Benizi Mission Church.

My reasons for favoring this resolution are twofold. First, as an individual interested in both science education and religious education, I cannot idly stand by as the two disciplines are mistakenly and fraudulently pitted against each other. Science should not and cannot speak to religion. Science is about the facts of the natural world. Religion should not and cannot speak to science. Religion is about questions of purpose and morality and faith. These are, in the words of Stephen Gould, nonoverlapping worlds of inquiry. Once boundaries are crossed, by either discipline, conflict erupts and tempers flare. And rightly so. In the example before us it is religion that is trying to enter the domain of science and scientists are crying foul. The controversy with evolution is not within the scientific community but rather within the religious community. Evolution is something the religious community needs to work out within its own membership. Notably, many within the religious community have done just that and are not in the least concerned by evolutionary theory. However, some within the religious community have decided that instead of resolving their concerns over evolution through religious channels they will instead enter the domain of science and mix religion and science. This is both bad science and bad religion. Moreover, as our political system currently stands, this is against the law in a public school science classroom. In order to ensure that scientists are free to pursue science and the religious are free to pursue religion we must be ever vigilant against agendas such as Intelligent Design Creationism, which attempt to blur the lines and dilute the strength of both disciplines. By supporting sound scientific principles through the adoption of this resolution one is also, with equal importance, standing for the freedom of religion.

Secondly, I advocate the passage of this resolution in the name of small communities everywhere. Last year the Darby area and the Darby schools were besieged by this issue. No matter which side of the fence one stood on, nobody could deny that Intelligent Design and its cohort Objective Origins shredded the cohesiveness of our town. Neighbors were at odds with each other. School employees were stressed and anxious. Students were unable to focus on learning. Businesses were harmed as patronage depended on the owners' stance. Residents spoke in hushed tones in public. We all wondered, both aloud and silently, who is "for"? who is "against"? Spring was tainted by an atmosphere of distrust and mounting alarm. And now, although the issue has been put to rest and the wound is slowly healing, only a fool would believe that the debate and debacle over good science and bad science is over in Darby. This issue is insidious. Darby will be fighting this issue in school board elections for years to come. Moreover, other small, rural communities across the state are sure to fall prey to the glib arguments and slick propaganda of the well-heeled, religiously-driven political organizations that sponsor IDC and its future metamorphoses. By supporting Senate Joint Resolution No. 8 you have the power to prevent the spread of this divisive, corrupting issue. You have the power to stand firm in support of good science and good religion.

Like many small communities across the rural west, Darby has a host of real problems. We struggle with local methamphetamine use and production. We struggle with a high school drop-out rate of over 20 percent. We struggle with at-risk elementary school children. We struggle with unemployment and underemployment. We need the time, money, resources, and goodwill of the entire community, working together, to address and solve these problems. We wasted an entire year debating an issue that was completely irrelevant to the reality of our situation. Our Montana kids and our Montana communities deserve better than this. I urge you to support Senate Joint Resolution No. 8.