

To: Senator Ryan and Members of the Senate Education Committee

From: Scott Hill, Box 5222, Mosby, MT Board Member of Sandsprings School District,
and former member Kansas State Board of Education

Re: Senate Joint Resolution #8

Members of the committee:

I have some comments regarding the accuracy and the relevance of SJ8.

The comments on the Kansas State Board of Education are complete fabrications. I served as an elected member of that Board from 1996 to 2000 and I can assure you that no national religious organizations pressured us to adopt specific science standards. The only national organization that exerted significant influence and pressure on the Board was the National Academy of Science. If the sponsor of this bill considers that body to be a "fundamentalist organization" apparently he recognizes atheism as a religion, since approximately 75% of the NAS consider themselves to be atheist.

Secondly evolutionary theory was not removed from the 1999 standards. An example is the 12th grade standard 3 for Life Science which states: "Experiences in grades 9-12 will allow all students to develop an understanding of the structure and function of the cell, the molecular basis of inheritance, biological evolution, interdependence and behavior of living things; and organization of living systems and use of matter." In the document evolution is mentioned at least a dozen more times, this is hardly the removal of evolution that was so widely reported.

Third, there is neither mention of nor allusion to creationism, intelligent design or creation science. Repeatedly I have challenged critics to show me verbiage that indicates any of the above and they without exception have been unable to.

Fourth, while the author of this resolution indicates that Kansas was ridiculed and portrayed in a dim light. It is important to realize that many who read the standards were very supportive, during the 12 month period of time following the adoption of the standards, my e-mail ran 2 to 1 in support of the decision. It is also important to note that the standards received higher marks by national reviews than Montana standards at the same time did. And lastly as policy makers it is important that we make decisions that are acceptable and appropriate for our constituents and not the national media.

This brings me to a more important point. Is this resolution appropriate? I agree with the first resolution of SJ8 that science curriculum needs to be developed locally. If I have regrets about the Kansas Science Standards it would be that they were ever required in the first place. Local control of school districts may be an overused cliché but it is the right way to run schools. I recognize the federal government requires state and increasingly federal controls, but I have yet to see data that suggest any improvement through centralization of education. Interestingly the remainder of the resolution spends it's time on trying to dictate what local districts can and cannot have in their curriculum. Sadly you can't have it both ways, if you want the benefits of local control, you can't dictate curriculum from the state level. If there is to be state standards they should be

developed by the state board and administered by the State Superintendent and not the legislature.

In summary this is poor legislation. It is written on faulty assumptions, to address a problem that doesn't exist. The legislature is not a tool to be used by religious bigots that want to harass those who have a faith.