

Group of Ohio Scientists Endorses Lesson Plan to Critically Analyze Evolution

SENATE EDUCATION

EXHIBIT NO. 22

DATE 2-7-05

BILL NO. 55-8

March 8, 2004

MARCH 8 -- Thirty Ohio scientists, including seven professors from The Ohio State University and eight biologists, have endorsed the state's proposed model lesson plan on the "Critical Analysis of Evolution" being considered for final adoption by the State Board of Education on March 9. At the same time, a national statement by 300 scientists disputing a key claim of Darwin's theory of evolution has also been released.

The 30 Ohio scientists come from both public and private universities as well as the business community and represent such fields as biochemistry, molecular and cell biology, entomology, chemistry, statistics, medicine, and physics.

Their statement reads in part: "As scientists in the state of Ohio, we support the Ohio science standards benchmark that requires students to know 'how scientists continue to investigate and critically analyze aspects of evolutionary theory.' We further endorse the model lesson plan on the 'Critical Analysis of Evolution' that has been developed to help school districts fulfill this benchmark, and we urge that the model lesson plan be adopted."

The Ohio scientists add that "Allowing students to study... disagreements over parts of evolutionary theory is a healthy part of a first-rate science education. Censoring such disagreements from the classroom would be a disservice to genuine science and a setback to good science education."

Many of the Ohio scientists are signers of the national "Scientific Dissent from Darwin" statement also being released this week. That national declaration is an updated version of a statement first issued by 100 scientists in 2001 and originally published in the New York Review of Books. Now endorsed by more than 300 scientists, including faculty members at Yale, Princeton, MIT, and the University of Georgia, the national statement reads: "We are skeptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life. Careful examination of the evidence for Darwinian theory should be encouraged."

Signers of the national statement include sixty biologists. One of them is biology professor Scott Minnich of the University of Idaho, who says that Darwinian evolution has become "the exceptional area that you can't criticize" in science education, something he considers "a bad precedent." In his view, we need to "teach it more, and teach it critically."

Yvonne Boldt, who holds a doctorate in microbiology from the University of Minnesota, adds that "the time has come for Darwinists to stop hiding behind the claim that all their opponents are creationists, and face the fact that there is a growing contingent of scientists who have found the evidence for Darwinian evolution wanting, and who are ready and willing to debate Darwinists on scientific grounds."

An Open Letter to the Ohio Board of Education Supporting the Critical Analysis of Evolution

Dear Members of the State Board of Education:

As scientists in the state of Ohio, we support the Ohio science standards benchmark that requires students to know "how scientists continue to investigate and critically analyze aspects of evolutionary theory." We further endorse the model lesson plan on the "Critical Analysis of Evolution" that has been developed to help school districts fulfill this benchmark, and we urge that the model lesson plan be adopted.

It is unfortunate that some members of the scientific community are using their voices to try to censor discussion in this area. In science, as in other academic fields, there are legitimate debates among reputable scholars. This is just as true in the field of evolutionary biology as it is other fields. Many scientists continue to raise questions about neo-Darwinian evolution, and in recent years a growing number of scientists have raised significant issues challenging various aspects of the theory. Allowing students to study these disagreements over parts of evolutionary theory is a healthy part of a first-rate science education. Censoring such disagreements from the classroom would be a disservice to genuine science and a setback to good science education.

Robert DiSilvestro (Ph.D., Biochemistry, Texas A&M)
Professor of Human Nutrition
The Ohio State University

David Ives (Ph.D., Physiological Chemistry, University of Minnesota)
Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry
The Ohio State University

William P. Shulaw (DVM, OSU)
Professor, Veterinary Preventive Medicine
The Ohio State University

Richard D. Slemons (DVM, Colorado State University; Ph.D., Veterinary Science (Virology), Univ. of Wisconsin--Madison)
Associate Professor, Dept. of Veterinary Preventive Medicine
The Ohio State University

Tom Marshall (Ph.D., Environmental Sci. and Eng., Oregon Graduate Institute of Science and Technology)
Adjunct Professor of Food, Agricultural and Biological Engineering
The Ohio State University

William Notz (Ph.D., Mathematical Statistics, Cornell University)
Professor of Statistics
The Ohio State University

Jerry Chubb (Ph.D., Industrial and Systems Engineering, OSU)
Associate Professor in the Department of Aerospace Engineering & Aviation
The Ohio State University

Daniel Kuebler (Ph.D., Molecular and Cell Biology, University of California,

Berkeley)
Assistant Professor of Biology
Franciscan University of Steubenville

John Silvius (Ph.D., Plant Physiology, West Virginia University)
Professor of Biology
Cedarville University

Georgia Purdom (Ph.D., Molecular Genetics, Ohio State University)
Assistant Professor of Biology
Mount Vernon Nazarene University

Mark Swanson (Ph.D., Biochemistry, University of Illinois)

Gerald Wegner (Ph.D., Entomology, Loyola University)

Christopher Williams (Ph.D., Biochemistry, The Ohio State University)

Robert Lattimer (Ph.D., Chemistry, University of Kansas--Lawrence)

Mark Foster (Ph.D., Chemical Engineering, University of Minnesota)
Professor, Polymer Science
University of Akron

Charles McGowen (M.D., Ohio State University College of Medicine)
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Northeast Ohio Universities College of Medicine

Jerry Johnson (Ph.D., Pharmacology and Toxicology, Purdue University)

Albert Gotch (Ph.D., Chemistry, Purdue University)
Associate Professor and Chair of Chemistry
Mount Union College

James Menart (Ph.D., Mechanical Engineering, University of Minnesota)
Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering
Wright State University

Mary Brown (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, Ohio State University)
Instructor
Columbus State Community College

Joel Lantz (Ph.D., Chemistry, University of Rhode Island)

Curtis Hawkins (M.D., Case Western Reserve University)
Assistant Clinical Professor of Dermatology
Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine

Huang Shyhchang (Ph.D., Chemistry, University of Florida)

Dale Schaefer (Ph.D., Physical Chemistry, MIT)
Professor, Materials Science and Engineering
University of Cincinnati

Steven Gollmer (Ph.D., Atmospheric Science, Purdue University)

Associate Professor of Physics, Cedarville University

Rudolf J Brits (Ph.D., Nuclear Chemistry, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa)

Larry H. Lytle (MD, Ohio State College of Medicine)

Stanley A. Watson (MS Botany, Univ. of Illinois; PhD Agronomy, Univ. of Illinois)

Karl A. Weber (Ph.D., Physical and Theoretical Organic Chemistry, Cornell University)

W. John Durfee (DVM, Texas A&M University)

Assistant Professor, Veterinary Resources, Case Western Reserve University

Ohio lesson plan pleases conservatives, irks apostles of Darwin

Phyllis Schlafly ([back to web version](#)) |  Send

March 22, 2004

"Why is it important for scientists to critically analyze evolution?"

That's the first question in the "student reflection" portion of a controversial 22-page section called "Critical Analysis of Evolution," which is now part of Ohio's 547-page public school science curriculum.

How could anybody object to such an innocuous question? Newspapers report a steady stream of news that scientists are questioning such dogmas as good cholesterol vs. bad cholesterol, vaccine links to autism, the causes of breast cancer, even fluoridation for children's teeth. Isn't the nature of science to question assertions and seek the proof from evidence?

On Feb. 10, the Ohio State Board of Education approved the new curriculum by a vote of 13-5 after being persuaded by 22 Ohio scientists that the lesson plan promotes academic freedom and that it is good for students in 10th grade to have an inquiring mind about evolution.

"Are we about teaching students how to think, or what to think?" asked one parent supporter of the lesson plan.

And it's optional; no teacher will be required to teach criticisms of evolution, and no students will be tested on the criticisms. So what's the big deal?

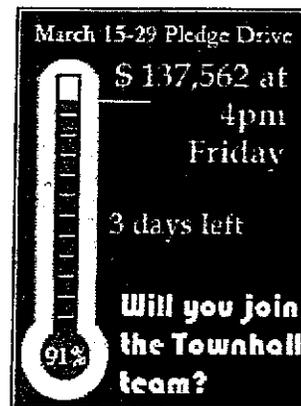
To some people, it's a very big deal. The American Civil Liberties Union is threatening a lawsuit.

Case Western Reserve University lecturer Patricia Princehouse - whose academic position is philosophy, not science - led the opposition to the new lesson. "It's sad day for science in Ohio," she said.

Another nonscientist, Florida State University law professor Steven Gey, flew in to warn Ohio residents that the lesson is unconstitutional and would almost certainly be struck down if it reached the U.S. Supreme Court. Maybe he is seeking an activist judge to rule that the Constitution prohibits allowing students to question anything in science class.

Gey's notions of constitutionality are unusual. He thinks that "moral relativism" is a "constitutional command," that the Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional, and that nude sunbathing should be given "constitutional protection."

There is nothing religious about creationism, or even about intelligent design, in the new Ohio standards. What is controversial is giving students the opportunity to question evolution; it's the inquiry-and-debate aspect that some people find so threatening.



The new lesson encourages students to consider both supporting and "challenging" evidence for evolution. The challenges to the theory are understated and are backed up with facts.

For example, the lesson says that the fossil record supports evolution with its increasing complexity of living forms. But the lesson also observes that "transitional fossils are rare in the fossil record" and "a growing number of scientists now question that ... transitional fossils really are transitional forms." The lesson notes that some changes in species occur quickly in the fossil record relative to longer stretches that manifest no change.

The new lesson plan presents the overused English peppered moth story found in most textbooks, which teaches that black moths survived because they rested on trees blackened by soot, while white moths were eaten by the birds. The lesson points out that "peppered moths do not actually rest on tree trunks," and that "no new species emerged" as evolutionists have long implied was the result of the soot.

The new lesson plan invites students to take a fresh look at evolutionary claims of common ancestry. The lesson observes that different genes and development have created similar anatomical structures, suggesting different ancestries.

Can it be that this kind of balanced information is so dangerous for high school students to hear that it must be censored from textbooks? Or that it rises to the level of a Supreme Court case where judges might declare it unconstitutional?

Diehard evolutionists have enjoyed censorship of any criticism of their beliefs for 100 years, and they won't willingly give up their academic turf. Their censorship demands became so irrational that Rich Baker, the Ohio board's vice president, called them "a bunch of paranoid, egotistical scientists afraid of people finding out (they) don't know anything."

Ohio has become the cutting edge in the long-running evolution debate. Georgia, New Mexico, Minnesota, West Virginia and Kansas have all wrestled with science standards and curricula on evolution in recent years.

The Alabama Senate Education Committee last week approved the "Academic Freedom Act," which says that no teacher or professor in public schools or universities may be fired, denied tenure or otherwise discriminated against for presenting "alternative theories" to evolution. The bill would also prohibit any student from being penalized because he held "a particular position on biological or physical origins" so long as the student demonstrated "acceptable understanding of course materials," which include evolution.