

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 21
INTRODUCED BY R. HAMILTON

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE AND SUPPORTING THE RIGHT OF LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEES TO ADOPT A SCIENCE CURRICULUM BASED ON SOUND SCIENTIFIC PRINCIPLES AND SUPPORTED BY SCIENCE TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

WHEREAS, a high quality science education is critically important for Montana students to be able to participate in today's technologically driven society; and

WHEREAS, the statewide science standards adopted by the Board of Public Education and implemented through a science curriculum designed by local boards of trustees across the state have resulted in a very high quality education system in our state; and

WHEREAS, Montana is fortunate to have many knowledgeable science teachers who are well qualified to determine appropriate strategies and tools for teaching science to Montana's students; and

WHEREAS, there are a number of national fundamentalist organizations seeking to force local schools to adopt a science curriculum that conforms to their particular religious beliefs and that includes theories commonly referred to as creationism, creation science, and intelligent design theory; and

WHEREAS, in 1999, these organizations were successful in pressuring the Kansas State Board of Education into removing evolution theory from the science curriculum, resulting in the State of Kansas being held up to national ridicule and portraying that state in a very negative light; and

WHEREAS, these national efforts undermine a community's local control, a teacher's academic freedom, and a student's opportunity to receive quality science education; and

WHEREAS, the doctrine of separation of church and state protects citizens, churches, and religious organizations from the government adopting or endorsing a particular religion's teachings.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

(1) That the Montana Legislature support local adoption of a science curriculum that is based on sound scientific principles and supported by science teachers, parents, and the local community.

(2) That the Montana Legislature oppose the efforts of national organizations seeking to impose their religious interpretations of events and phenomena on local schools under the guise of science curricula.

(3) That the Montana Legislature recognize the importance of teaching Montana students about religious traditions, beliefs, and history and encourage inclusion of these topics in religious studies, sociology, and history.

(4) That the Montana Legislature recognize the importance of and support the separation of church and state to protect religious freedom of all citizens to worship as their conscience guides them.

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