



May 5, 2008

The Honorable Brad Henry
2300 N. Lincoln Blvd., Room 212
Oklahoma City, OK 73105
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Dear Governor Henry:

I am writing today on behalf of the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) to express concern about the Religious Viewpoints Antidiscrimination Act, which was added as an amendment to HB 2633. If signed into law, this provision will set-back science education in Oklahoma.

AIBS is a non-profit, non-partisan organization of nearly 200 science and education professional societies and organizations, and roughly 5,000 individual scientists and educators. Collectively, AIBS represents roughly 250,000 scientists and science educators across the United States and around the world. AIBS is dedicated to advancing biological research and education for the welfare of society.

The Senate amendment to HB 2633 grants permission to individuals with specific, narrow religious agendas to disrupt the teaching of evolutionary science in Oklahoma public school classrooms. This legislation would allow non-scientific concepts, such as creationism and "intelligent design," to be taught as scientific principles. Quite simply, these are religious belief systems and not science. To require that teachers accept non-scientific explanations for natural phenomena is counter to quality science education. Further, it risks setting the students of Oklahoma well behind their national and international counterparts.

Supernatural explanations for natural phenomena as espoused by the author of this amendment are not scientifically testable and for centuries have not been accepted as science. The biologists and science educators represented by AIBS, and the scientific community as a whole, agree that there is no research supporting either creationism or "intelligent design," or challenging the importance of evolution for explaining the history and diversity of life. Thus, pseudoscientific ideas like creationism and "intelligent design" have no place in the science classroom, and, therefore, do not deserve special protection by the law.

The future educational, employment, and economic growth potential of Oklahoma and the United States depends upon a scientifically literate workforce and a population capable of making informed decisions. A strong foundation in science, that includes a basic understanding of the tenets of evolution, is required to fuel the advances in research, development, and innovation that will help Oklahoma increase its economic opportunities from science and technology, including the biotechnology and biomedical sectors.

In closing, we ask you to oppose HB 2633 if it contains this onerous provision. If we may be of assistance to you in your deliberations, please do not hesitate to contact me or Dr. Robert Gropp at 202-628-1500.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. O'Grady", written in a cursive style.

Richard T. O'Grady, Ph.D.
Executive Director