



Should creationism be taught in the public schools?

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Not as science. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled in two separate cases that "creation science" (or its euphemism "intelligent design") was in fact advocating a particular religion, and could not be taught AS SCIENCE in public schools. These rulings have also been supported by five major state and federal court decisions.

However, creationism may be taught in history or comparative religion classes along with other religious views. God and the Bible are important parts of American culture, and children should be exposed to a variety of ideas in school. Most Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians, Protestants, and Jews see no conflict with the accepted scientific views of geology, evolution, astronomy, anthropology, botany, chemistry or physics. The Pope has publicly confirmed the evidence for evolution as science, and virtually all Catholic schools teach evolution.

Since teaching creationism as science has been ruled unconstitutional, creationists have pursued an alternative approach. They now seek to teach the "evidence" against evolution, and they appeal to the concepts of "fairness" and "letting the children decide." However, despite creationist rhetoric, there are currently no viable scientific alternatives to evolution. Furthermore, none of the purported "evidence" has been accepted by mainstream science in the fields of physics, geology, and astronomy, as well as biology. In every case, this "evidence" has been shown to be misleading or false. Creationist "evidence" against evolution is no better than so-called evidence that the earth is flat, demons cause disease, or the stork brings babies.

Some Board decisions have tended to demean scientists and their contributions. My opponent voted to ignore the input of thousands of scientists and educators in creating state science standards. She recently also voted to delay the appointment of commissioners to evaluate science textbooks because too many scientists had applied. The delay allowed some Board members to solicit creationists, many without any scientific credentials. Ultimately, the Board selected several creationists from the "new" list of applicants.

The real issue is much broader than creationism versus evolution. Do we want to teach modern science or do we want to teach outmoded and archaic philosophies that most mainstream religions have long ago discarded?

Creationists have lost in the courts of other religions, in the courts of law, and in the courts of science. So they have now taken their case directly to New Mexico's school children; they hope that these young minds, still learning the basics of scientific thinking, may be deceived into confusing the boundary between religion and science. It is up to the rest of us to make sure this does not happen.