

Why SB 393 by Brecheen Is a Bad Bill

SB 393 is unnecessary, since state science standards and policies already provide appropriate freedom to science teachers. The standards require teachers to use the 8 scientific practices in their classroom which guarantee critical thinking--even thinking critically about currently accepted science.

SB 393 removes accountability, since it would make it impossible for administrators and school boards to restrain maverick teachers. Despite the bill's sponsors assurances, local control would be lost.

SB 393 is so vague that it would engender unnecessary conflict, and even litigation, over science curriculum and instruction.

SB 393 is opposed by organizations of science teachers, its supposed beneficiaries; Senator Brecheen has never released the details of the poll of science teachers which he says supports the bill.

SB 393's sponsor has acknowledged that it is aimed at the teaching of evolution and climate change, which are not scientifically controversial. In late 2010, Brecheen announced his intention to file antievolution legislation in the *Durant Daily Democrat* (December 19, 2010): "Renowned scientists now asserting that evolution is laden with errors are being ignored. ... Using your tax dollars to teach the unknown, without disclosing the entire scientific findings[,] is incomplete and unacceptable." In a later column in the newspaper (December 24, 2010), he indicated that his intention was to have creationism presented as scientifically credible, writing, "I have introduced legislation requiring every publically funded Oklahoma school to teach the debate of creation vs. evolution using the known science, even that which conflicts with Darwin's religion." He has indeed introduced such anti-science bills every year since 2011.

The catchphrase "scientific strengths and weaknesses" is deceptive. It was developed by a creationist think tank (Discovery Institute) and used in its model "academic freedom act". The sole purpose of such bills is to provide cover to those that would promote the illegitimate "scientific creationism" or "intelligent design" in school science classes.

The bill promotes the use of "scientific information" by teachers in presenting controversial topics. "Scientific information" is a loaded term that is not defined in the bill. "Scientific information" could mean anything that sounds "sciency", from crackpot pseudoscience websites to the creationist "curriculum" available from the Discovery Institute.

The bill sets students up for learning more about alternative theories than strong science that is tested by standardized tests that are necessary for being college and career ready. In Oklahoma, our economy requires a strong STEM workforce. This bill does nothing to help students be STEM ready, and therefore harms our economy.

The bill is a solution looking for a problem.

Provided by Oklahomans for Excellence in Science Education – www.oklascience.org