

Background Information on the Academic Freedom Bill of 2008

Summary of bill

Deceptively named: The Academic Freedom Bill is actually
“a bill to protect the ignorant.”

Claims that teachers and students who do not understand evolution have been adversely impacted by their lack of knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.

Gives teachers with a religious agenda the right to present theo-non-science as a way to discredit the real science on evolution.

Prevents administrators from being able to discipline rogue teachers who ignore the standards.

Gives students with a religious agenda the right to disrupt the classroom during instruction on evolution and to seek legal remedy against teachers who insist on teaching what is contained in the standards.

Includes a disclaimer that this isn't religiously motivated in hopes that no one will notice it actually is.

Actual text of the bill at: http://www.flsenate.gov/cgi-bin/view_page.pl?Tab=session&Submenu=1&FT=D&File=sb2692.html&Directory=session/2008/Senate/bills/billtext/html/

Discovery Institute's Role in this:

This bill is a verbatim copy of a draft piece of legislation from the Discovery Institute. See: <http://www.academicfreedompetition.com/freedom.php>

It is part of their “wedge” strategy to destroy science by confusing it with theo-non-science in the public's mind. An interesting note on the specific language in this bill, it seems to refer to the approach of their latest book. Apparently, since their teach the controversy approach was slapped down by a judge in Dover, they now just want to teach the arguments for and against evolution, which is exactly the approach of their latest book.

Regardless, their goal is to generate lawsuits to try and get a legal precedent for their materials to be used in school classrooms.

They are aware of what is happening in Florida and are using our (FCS) opposition to this bill as a fundraising campaign. (see: http://www.evolutionnews.org/2008/03/darwinist_activists_at_florida.html#more)

Legal Status of the Bill:

2 bills were filed, one in the Florida House and one in the Senate. Both need to pass in order for this to go to the Governor to be signed into law.

The committees responsible for reviewing this legislation in both the senate and the house will be the pre K – 12 Education committee. Both of these committees have 2 staff members attached to them that can be used as a source of regular information on what is happening with the bill.

Status in the House

This bill is referred to as 2008 H 1483 bill was filed and no action has yet been taken on it. It should be referred to the prek-12 committee where it will hopefully be tabled and die. Committee information is located at:

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Committees/committeesdetail.aspx?SessionId=57&CommitteId=2368> including email links to the staff.

H1483 was introduced by Rep Hays and has 2 co-sponsors, Rep. Attkisson, and Rep Kelly. Kelly is on the pre k-12 committee. It has had its first reading which means it will probably be referred to the committee soon. Status of the bill can be checked at:

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=39349&SessionIndex=-1&SessionId=57&BillText=&BillNumber=&BillSponsorIndex=0&BillListIndex=0&BillStatuteText=&BillTypeIndex=0&BillReferredIndex=0&HouseChamber=H&BillSearchIndex=14>

Status in the Senate

This bill is referred to as 2008 S 2692 has been filed but no other action has been taken yet. As in the house, it should be referred to the pre k – 12 committee. Committee information is at: http://www.flsenate.gov/cgi-bin/View_Page.pl?Tab=committees&Submenu=1&File=index.html&Directory=committees/senate/ed/ While this page lists the staff members and phone and address contact for them, but no email.

This bill was introduced by Sen. Storms and co-introduced by Sen. Wise. Unfortunately, Wise is on the pre k- 12 committee. This means supporters for this bill have a leg up on getting it through the Senate committee. Status of this bill can be checked at:

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/index.cfm?Mode=Bills&Submenu=1&BillMode=ViewBillInfo&Billnum=2692&Year=2008>

Groups that may support passage of this bill

Florida Family Policy Council

<http://www.flfamily.org/>

Listed as “good bill” on their website under “legislative updates”

Not blogged about (no blogs since January 09, 2008 (they seem VERY concerned about gambling, anti-abortion and gay marriage right now)

Florida Coalition for Academic Freedom

<http://floridacaf.org/>

No posts, no blogs, no supporters listed

Link to Discovery Institute Website

Discovery Institute Evolution News & Views

<http://www.evolutionnews.org/>

Darwinist Activists at Florida Citizens for Science Think Academic Freedom is “Smelly Crap” posted March 05, 2008

Focus On Family

<http://www.family.org/>

Abortion, gay marriage, etc. Nothing listed regarding “Academic Freedom”

Alliance Defense Fund (A religious liberty group)

<http://www.alliancedefensefund.org/main/default.aspx>

Nothing on website

Christian Coalition of Florida

<http://www.ccfla.org/index.php>

Nothing listed anywhere on the website

Dennis Baxley was named Executive Director of the Christian Coalition of Florida on February 1, 2008.