

Why SB 665 by Brecheen Is a Bad Bill

The bill is unnecessary, as its main points are effectively covered by existing Oklahoma curriculum standards. There is no indication why we need a new state law specifying what teachers already (are required to) do and have been doing for decades. While superficially mundane, **the bill has ulterior motives if one knows the creationist code in which the bill is written and these motives have nothing to do with science or critical thinking.**

- **Sen. Brecheen's own words make his anti-science intentions abundantly clear.** In 2010 he stated in the press (that he would), “introduce a bill to place creationism into public schools”; and later, “I have introduced legislation requiring every publicly 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
- There are two well known, **anti-science tactics in this bill:**

1. 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”. This includes prefabricated language that has been introduced in many state legislatures (but passed only in Tennessee and Louisiana, where it is now being challenged). 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.**

2. 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.** Rather than referring to “scientific evidence”, “testable hypotheses”, “experiments”, or “peer reviewed publications”, **“scientific information” could mean anything that sounds “sciency”, from crackpot pseudoscience websites to the creationist “curriculum” available from the Discovery Institute.** This is, again, a code-phrase understood by those who would introduce pseudoscience into science classes.

- **SB 665 is nothing but a sham,** intended to allow back-door promotion of religiously motivated, anti-science material into Oklahoma science classes. In effect, it would encourage science teachers with idiosyncratic opinions to teach anything they pleased
- It is telling that **no teacher group or scientific organization supports this bill;** support comes exclusively from religious groups.
- **In effect this bill would encourage students to simply reject the parts of science they don’t happen to like.** This will clearly confuse our students about the nature of science, inhibit their ability to understand important scientific issues facing society, and reduce their competitiveness for science related jobs.

- Passage of bills such as SB 665 will clearly **harm the ability of Oklahoma to attract scientists and science-based industries** and lead to **costly challenges in the courts, at taxpayer expense!**

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