

For Immediate Release

To: Michigan's legislative leaders and the media

From: Michigan Citizens for Science, a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and improving science education in our public schools

HB 6027 is Trojan horse legislation that should be rejected

Rep. John Moolenaar (R-Midland) has submitted legislation to the House Education Committee that would weaken public school science education. HB 6027 purports to be a bill supporting "academic freedom," but in reality it is a Trojan horse to facilitate the smuggling in of Intelligent Design Creationism (IDC) as an alternative to evolution.

First, Rep. Moolenaar has previously submitted legislation that would allow IDC into public school science classrooms. In September 2005 he submitted HB 5251, which would have rewritten the core curriculum standards to require that students be taught to "Use the scientific method to critically evaluate scientific theories including, but not limited to, the theories of global warming and evolution." The current bill targets these as well. HB 5152 was later replaced by HB 5606, which used similar language but did not specify evolution and global warming as the targets. In a *Detroit Free Press* article, Rep. Moolenaar admitted that this bill would allow local school boards to put IDC into science classrooms, something Federal courts have already rejected as unconstitutional.

Second, the "academic freedom" language was concocted by the Discovery Institute, the most prominent IDC advocacy organization in the country. In fact, there is good reason to believe that the Discovery Institute either wrote this bill themselves or consulted with Rep. Moolenaar on how it should be worded. The Discovery Institute announced the bill's number and content on their website two days before it was available on the Michigan legislature website and before it was referred to the Education Committee. On April 30, the Discovery Institute on their webpage quoted Rep. Moolenaar directly about his bill and noted that his bill, like the many other similar bills around the country, "have been adapted from sample legislation developed by Discovery Institute."

Third, the "academic freedom" language of the bill is merely the latest rhetorical strategy advocated by the Discovery Institute to get IDC into science classrooms. For instance, in 2000, they urged the Ohio State Board of Education to adopt a policy explicitly allowing

IDC to be taught. When it looked like that idea would fail, they changed gears and adopted a new strategy: rather than demanding that IDC be taught, they said that they only wanted the "arguments for and against evolution" to be taught. That language then was modified slightly into wanting to teach the "scientific strengths and weaknesses of evolution" and thereafter into teaching "critical analysis of evolution" and sometimes expressed as "teaching the controversy." We see that rhetorical history reflected in HB 6027 in its demand that teachers be allowed to teach the "scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of existing scientific theories.

Fourth, all of these rhetorical tactics amount to the same thing because ID, like other forms of creationism, is nothing more than a set of arguments against evolution. There is no theory of ID that can be tested; there are merely arguments taken from earlier creationist writings that have been discredited by the scientific community decades ago. So when they shift from wanting to teach IDC to wanting to teach the "arguments for and against" or the "strengths and weaknesses" of evolution, they are just aiming to get the long-discredited claims of IDC in the back door without mentioning them by name.

Fifth, the courts have already ruled against ID. In 2005, a Federal court regarding a pro-ID policy in Dover, Pennsylvania ruled that "Intelligent Design" was nothing more than a repackaging of the "creation science" that had already been ruled unconstitutional to teach in public schools by the Supreme Court in 1987. Judge John Jones, an appointee of President George W. Bush, noted in his ruling that this new tactic of "teaching the controversy" and advocating "critical thinking" about evolution was, in reality, just a new rhetorical label for the same old unconstitutional ideas:

"Moreover, ID's backers have sought to void the scientific scrutiny which we have now determined that it cannot withstand by advocating that the controversy, but not ID itself, should be taught in science class. This tactic is at best disingenuous, and at worst a canard. The goal of the [ID Movement] is not to encourage critical thought, but to foment a revolution which would supplant evolutionary theory with ID."

Moolenaar's legislation does a disservice to teachers, school administrators and local school boards by urging them to incorporate material into science classes that is at odds with well-established science. The bill itself notes that "some teachers may be unsure of the expectations concerning how they should present information on such subjects," yet it does nothing to clear up that uncertainty. It does not spell out what the "the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of existing scientific theories" are that teachers are supposed to discuss and that lack of definition is intentional. This is a recipe for disaster, ushering teachers and school boards into a Dover trap, by inviting them to include material that not only has no scientific basis, but has already been declared in Federal court to be unconstitutional to teach. HB 6027 ushers schools down a path that will inevitably lead to expensive and divisive court battles. This legislation should be rejected.

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