



1259 Trumansburg Rd. (rt. 96) Ithaca, NY 14850/607.273.6623/www.museumoftheearth.org

To whom it may concern in the Texas State Board of Education:

I write to you as a concerned citizen of Texas. I also write to you as a scientifically informed citizen and community member of the Paleontological Research Institution. I have familiarized myself with the amendments proposed at your January 22nd, 2009 meeting, and feel strongly that these are poor choices for the health of our educational system both here in the state of Texas, and throughout the USA.

Firstly, Dr. McLeroy's amendments to the Biology section of our TEKS is an obvious attempt at rewording the creationist/intelligent design campaign of the "strengths and weaknesses" of evolutionary theory, which has been defeated in many school boards already. The theory of evolution is as solidly accepted by the scientific community as is the theory of gravity, as the term implies repeated and replicable testing with the same end results observed. To encourage or allow teachers to explore the "sufficiencies and insufficiencies" of any of the founding tenants of biology, including evolution, promotes incorrectly teaching that there is scientific contention about whether evolution occurs, and opens the door for philosophical debates in a science classroom. This is a pedagogically unsound teaching practice for science teachers and should not be accepted.

Further, Dr. McLeroy's evidentiary support, brought forth to the Board in a series of quotations from scientifically accredited persons and institutions, is extremely unethical. In his support quotations, he has omitted the words and phrases that support evolutionary theory and instead chosen parts of sentences that were originally intended to bring literary color to a scientific piece. In many examples, two or three word phrases were hand selected from a two paragraph discussion and pasted together to create an entirely new meaning. This is unethical behavior that should be punished by a school board in the same way it is punished in a classroom; by deeming it unacceptable and unethical.

It may be true that Dr. McLeroy was unaware of his mistake. Pro-creationist organizations like Answers in Genesis (AIG) provide common access to altered quotations like those used by Dr. McLeroy. Dr. McLeroy met with Mike Riddle, a creation speaker for AIG, in August of 2008, and has been called a biblical creationist by AIG director, Ken Hamm. It is possible that Dr. McLeroy simply accepted and used without question these altered quotations from AIG in support of his "sufficiencies/insufficiencies" amendment; that would, however, indicate that he had not read the original sources as he claimed during the Jan. 22nd meeting. Nonetheless, it can clearly be seen that Dr. McLeroy was unethically presenting these changes to support the teaching of creationist ideas in science classrooms, which has been deemed to be unconstitutional.

As to the amendments proposed by Ms. Cargill in the Earth and Space Science standards, many of them have been intentionally reworded to imply a false level of uncertainty in the scientific understanding of the discussed principles. To teach that there are differing theories and proposed models creates an ambiguity in the teaching of the science that does not exist within the science itself. Science is not a philosophical debate, and to allow the teaching of Earth science and biology in a way that places philosophical explanations for physical phenomena on equal footing with scientific explanations hurts the youth of Texas and the US

With respect to the amendments of Ms. Cargill, I support the recommendations of the Earth and Space Sciences TEK Working Group. I thank you for your time and consideration.