



Senator Eliot Shapleigh

District 29

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

March 26, 2009

SENATOR SHAPLEIGH ENCOURAGES TEXAS BOARD OF EDUCATION TO ELIMINATE "STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES" LANGUAGE FROM STATE SCIENCE CURRICULUM

"Allowing scientifically unfounded arguments and theories to be taught in our public schools discounts science in favor of religious ideology, and religious ideology has no place in our public school system. Maintaining the "strengths and weaknesses" language in our science curriculum would undermine science education in our public schools and, frankly, places Texas at a competitive disadvantage, both in terms of education and attracting 21st century businesses into our state."

AUSTIN - Today, Senator Eliot Shapleigh (D-El Paso) sent a letter to Texas State Board of Education Chairman Don McLeroy urging the board not to adopt language for state science curriculum that would discount the validity of the science behind evolution.

This week, the board is hearing public testimony on whether or not to include a rule that would require "strengths and weaknesses" of evolution be taught in public schools. This requirement would undermine the theory of evolution in favor of religious teachings. If adopted, these standards will be in science textbooks across the state for the next 10 years.

Today, the board was split 7-7 on the motion. A final vote will occur on Friday, March 27, 2009.

The text of Senator Shapleigh's letter to Chairman McLeroy follows:

- More -

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March 26, 2009

The Honorable Don McLeroy
Chair, State Board of Education
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701

VIA INTERAGENCY MAIL

RE: Texas Science Education Curriculum

Dear Chairman McLeroy:

I write regarding the State Board of Education's upcoming vote on the science curriculum in Texas public schools. I am very concerned about the current proposal that would compromise the integrity of our public schools by discounting the validity of the science behind evolution. This decision will impact millions of students and teachers and I urge you and your colleagues to vote against the proposed amendments to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.

Including the "strengths and weaknesses" language would deny Texas students their right to a quality science education. Allowing scientifically unfounded arguments and theories to be taught in our public schools discounts science in favor of religious ideology, and religious ideology has no place in our public school system. Maintaining the "strengths and weaknesses" language in our science curriculum would undermine science education in our public schools and, frankly, places Texas at a competitive disadvantage, both in terms of education and attracting 21st century businesses into our state.

Again, I urge you to vote against these proposed amendments. This decision will affect Texas students for years to come, and we can not afford to provide students with a flawed educational foundation. Given the level of concern regarding this vote, I ask for your written response to these concerns.

Very truly yours,

Eliot Shapleigh

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