

Talking Points Opposing HB 1168

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- A. **There is no need for HB 1168 or any similar legislation.** “Critical thinking,” a pedagogical benchmark that creationists have co-opted as a code term, along with other code language, is already covered in Louisiana state science standards. Teachers have the “academic freedom” they need, within state guidelines, to properly teach good science and the critical thinking techniques associated with that instruction.
- B. **The LA FAMILY FORUM (LFF) is falsely framing the teaching of a non-existent scientific “controversy” about evolution as an academic freedom issue. Pro-science advocates should NOT argue on the creationists’ terms.** The proper teaching of science is an issue of professional competence and ethics, as well as a constitutional issue when the religious idea of creationism is involved. This bill will permit the teaching of creationism, which is a religious belief. Religious belief should be respected, but the appropriate place to teach it is in the churches. It is not science.
- C. **Louisiana is being used to carry out the agenda of the LA FAMILY FORUM and, in all probability, the DISCOVERY INSTITUTE (DI), an out-of-state creationist think tank in Seattle that has caused trouble nationwide.** HB 1168 is directly rooted in the Ouachita Parish “science curriculum policy,” which is written in the code language of “academic freedom.” **The LFF is advertising this policy as “bulletproof” in an attempt to get other school districts to ignore the legal dangers of adopting the policy.** DI is recommending the Ouachita policy as a “model policy” for adoption by other school systems. They also publicly applauded SB 561, to which HB 1168 is identical, on their website. **This virtually guarantees that the Discovery Institute, an out-of-state, national creationist organization, is invested in this bill. They have virtually unlimited resources to help support it.**
- D. **IMPORTANT: DO NOT LET OUR STATE’S CHILDREN, TEACHERS, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS BE USED IN THE AGENDA OF AN OUT-OF-STATE CREATIONIST ORGANIZATION.** The Discovery Institute sees legislation such as HB 1168 as a potential legal case for which they have crafted a legal strategy. (See DeWolf, Meyer, and DeForrest, *Utah Law Review*, July 2000.) All they need is to find the right judicial circuit, for which they are looking. Since they supported SB 561, and consequently its twin HB 1168, it can only be because they will exercise significant, if not dominant, control of any legal maneuvering and litigation that result from passage of HB 1168.
- E. Sen. Nevers has publicly asserted that SB 561 was not about either creationism or religion and that he introduced it as a favor to the LFF. **However, Sen. Nevers was quoted directly and verbatim in the Hammond Daily Star (April 6, 2008) specifying that SB 561 WAS about creationism, which means that HB 1168 is also about creationism.**

“The Louisiana Family Forum suggested the bill, Nevers said.

‘They [LFF] believe that scientific data related to creationism should be discussed when dealing with Darwin’s theory. This would allow the discussion of scientific facts,’ Nevers said. ‘I feel the students should know there are weaknesses and strengths in both scientific arguments.’”

Unlike evolutionary theory, creationism is not a “scientific argument.” It is a religious belief. “Weaknesses and strengths” is a creationist code term. Sen. Nevers’s use of it indicates that he has been coached in the strategy of using code language. **But his use of the term “creationism” was a “Freudian slip” that gave away SB 561’s, and thus HB 1168’s, true intent.**

****Note:** After he was quoted, the *Daily Star* published both a “clarification” from Sen. Nevers and a letter from Rev. Gene Mills, executive director of the LA Family Forum. However, neither Sen. Nevers nor Rev. Mills denied the authenticity of Sen. Nevers’s April 6 quote, and the *Daily Star* has not published a retraction.

- F. **The LFF has shown no interest in science education in Louisiana except to attack it.** They did so in 2002 when they tried and failed to get evolution disclaimers placed in biology textbooks. They attempted this after they failed to influence the content of those books so as to undermine the teaching of evolution. **The LFF has contributed NOTHING either to science education or to good pedagogy in Louisiana.** For years, they have promoted creationism, both young earth creationism and intelligent design, on their website. Its operatives have no expertise in either science or science education.
- G. **Moreover, Sen. Nevers has both supported and sponsored creationist legislation in the recent past.** In 2001, he voted for Rep. Weston-Broome’s HCR 74, which sought to have the legislature declare Charles Darwin and the theory of evolution to be the source of modern racism. In 2003, Sen. Nevers introduced HCR 50, which contained the language of the “Santorum amendment,” the creationist code language that had been inserted by creationism supporters into the legislative history of the No Child Left Behind Bill in 2001. **This language was written by the Discovery Institute, which is the headquarters of the intelligent design creationist movement in the United States.**
- H. Rep. Frank Hoffman (District 15, West Monroe), who has introduced HB 1168 in the House and serves on the House Education Committee, was the Asst. Supt. of the Ouachita Parish school system in November 2006, when the school board adopted its “Science Curriculum Policy,” formally entitled **“RESOLUTION ON TEACHER ACADEMIC FREEDOM TO TEACH SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE REGARDING CONTROVERSIAL SCIENTIFIC SUBJECTS.”** Mr. Hoffman helped to get the Ouachita policy passed, along with Supt. Bob Webber and West Monroe High School biology teacher Danny Pennington. Rep. Hoffman’s filing HB 1168 in the House was done in order to resurrect the original SB 561, which was amended by the Senate Education Committee on April 17, 2008, to become SB 733, the “Louisiana Science Education Act.” Although SB 733 is itself an objectionable bill because it still contains creationist code language, its backers at the Louisiana Family Forum want the original provisions of SB 561, with its specific targeting of evolution, global warming, etc., restored. This proves that they are targeting these specific scientific subjects and are not interested in promoting quality education across the curriculum.
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Contacting House Education Committee Members

The following House Education Committee members should be contacted **IMMEDIATELY** with a request that they **VOTE AGAINST HB 1168**. The defeat of this bill is the only way for legislators to send a clear, unambiguous, decisive message that we will not allow our children to be targeted by the LA Family Forum and an out-of-state creationist think tank. **THE COMMITTEE MUST HEAR FROM OPPONENTS OF THE BILL IMMEDIATELY SINCE IT MAY BE SCHEDULED IN COMMITTEE DURING THE WEEK OF APRIL 28.**

Written messages via either e-mail or fax are best, but phone calls are also helpful and will be tallied by legislative aides. Please keep your message to one page, get to the point, and be polite and respectful. If you send a fax, the representative’s legislative aide in the district office will scan the letter and forward it to the legislator electronically from the district office to the Capitol. E-mails will be forwarded to the committee members at the Capitol. You may want to also attach a copy of your letter (Microsoft Word or Adobe pdf) to your e-mail in addition to pasting your remarks into the text of your e-mail. Be sure to put your subject, **“REQUEST TO OPPOSE HB 1168,”** in a prominent place at the beginning of your message, either in the subject line of the e-mail and in a memo line at the beginning of your letter. The legislative aide should be able to see at a glance the subject of your message.

The following 10 committee members should be contacted, but you may personally know others who will also be receptive. The House Education Committee website has more contact information: http://house.louisiana.gov/H_Cmtes/H_CMTE_ED.asp

Name	Legislative Aide	Fax #	E-mail Address	Phone #
Rep. James Armes (Leesville)	Nanette Swisher	(337) 238-7007	arnesj@legis.state.la.us	(337) 238-2004
Rep. Elton Aubert (Vacherie)	Dainyelle Bell	(225) 265-1833	auberte@legis.state.la.us	(225) 265-1831
Rep. Austin Badon (New Orleans)	Josett Thompson ("E-mail is good.")	(504) 243-7785	larep100@legis.state.la.us	(504) 243-7783
Rep. Stephen Carter (Baton Rouge)	Mark McNemar	(225) 362-5306	carters@legis.state.la.us	(225) 362-5305
Rep. Charles Chaney (Rayville)	Annette Rayborn	(318) 728- 5876	chaneyb@legis.state.la.us	(318) 728-5875
Rep. Herbert Dixon (Alexandria)	Lois Harris	(318) 487-5506	dixonh@legis.state.la.us	(318) 487-5661
Rep. John Bel Edwards (Amite)	Joan Arnone	(985) 748-2247	edwardsj@legis.state.la.us	(985) 748- 2245
Rep. Walt Leger (New Orleans)	Brenda Trammel	(504) 556-9972	legerw@legis.state.la.us	(504) 556-9970
Rep. Harold L. Ritchie (Bogalusa)	Patricia Russell Trina Stogner ("E-mail is best.")	(985) 730- 2149	larep075@legis.state.la.us	(985) 730-2147
Rep. Patricia Haynes Smith (Baton Rouge)	Jacqueline Addison	(225) 342-7117	smithp@legis.state.la.us	(225) 342-7106