

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 1st Session of the 52nd Legislature (2009)

3 SENATE BILL 320

By: Brogdon

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6 AS INTRODUCED

7 An Act relating to schools; creating the Scientific
8 Education and Academic Freedom Act; providing short
9 title; stating Legislative findings; directing State
10 Board of Education, district boards of education, and
11 certain administrators to create certain environment
12 within schools; permitting teachers to help students
13 understand certain information about scientific
14 theories; disallowing State Board of Education,
15 district boards of education, and certain
16 administrators from prohibiting teachers from helping
17 students understand certain information about
18 scientific theories; providing for evaluation of
19 students based on understanding of course materials;
20 prohibiting penalizing of students for holding
21 certain position on scientific theories; prohibiting
22 certain construction; directing State Department of
23 Education to provide certain notification; directing
24 superintendents to disseminate certain information;
providing for codification; providing an effective
date; and declaring an emergency.

19 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

20 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
21 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 27-101 of Title 70, unless there
22 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

23 A. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Scientific
24 Education and Academic Freedom Act".

1 B. The Oklahoma Legislature finds that an important purpose of
2 science education is to inform students about scientific evidence
3 and to help students develop critical thinking skills they need in
4 order to become intelligent, productive, and scientifically informed
5 citizens. The Legislature further finds that the teaching of some
6 scientific subjects, such as biological evolution, the chemical
7 origins of life, global warming, and human cloning, can cause
8 controversy, and that some teachers may be unsure of the
9 expectations concerning how they should present information on such
10 subjects.

11 C. The State Board of Education, district boards of education,
12 district superintendents and administrators, and public school
13 principals and administrators shall endeavor to create an
14 environment within public elementary and secondary schools that
15 encourages students to explore scientific questions, learn about
16 scientific evidence, develop critical thinking skills, and respond
17 appropriately and respectfully to differences of opinion about
18 controversial issues. Such educational authorities in this state
19 shall also endeavor to assist teachers to find more effective ways
20 to present the science curriculum where it addresses scientific
21 controversies. Toward this end, teachers shall be permitted to help
22 students understand, analyze, critique, and review in an objective
23 manner the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of
24 existing scientific theories pertinent to the course being taught.

1 D. Neither the State Board of Education, nor any district board
2 of education, district superintendent or administrator, or public
3 school principal or administrator shall prohibit any teacher in a
4 school district in this state from helping students understand,
5 analyze, critique, and review in an objective manner the scientific
6 strengths and scientific weaknesses of existing scientific theories
7 pertinent to the course being taught.

8 E. Students may be evaluated based upon their understanding of
9 course materials, but no student in any public school or institution
10 shall be penalized in any way because the student may subscribe to a
11 particular position on scientific theories.

12 F. This act only protects the teaching of scientific
13 information, and this act shall not be construed to promote any
14 religious or non-religious doctrine, promote discrimination for or
15 against a particular set of religious beliefs or non-beliefs, or
16 promote discrimination for or against religion or non-religion. On
17 the contrary, the intent is to create an environment in which both
18 the teacher and students can openly and objectively discuss the
19 facts and observations of science, and the assumptions that underlie
20 their interpretation.

21 G. By no later than the start of the 2009-2010 school year, the
22 State Department Education shall notify all district superintendents
23 of the provisions of this act. Each superintendent shall then
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1 disseminate to all employees within the district a copy of the
2 provisions of this act.

3 SECTION 2. This act shall become effective July 1, 2009.

4 SECTION 3. It being immediately necessary for the preservation
5 of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is hereby
6 declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and
7 be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

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