

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.

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

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

A. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Scientific  
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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