The 2007 Intelligent Design Creationist Attempts at Legislating Religion Into Science Education (Annotated)

Intelligent Design Creationist Proposed Bills and Joint Memorials in the 2007

New Mexico Legislature

(SB 371, SJM 9, HB 506, HJM 14)

M. Kim Johnson

12 February, 2007

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First, a Little History

- **This started many years ago with the National Creationism Movement**
- **These particular Bills and Joint Memorials have an immediate basis in Rio Rancho and Los Lunas**
- **Rio Rancho Policy 401 – Summer 2005**
- **Los Lunas teacher presenting creationism as "fact" – pre- 2005**
- **A rewrite of the RR policy, removing its teeth, has led to the current legislative action**

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Why Should You Care about These Bills and Memorials?

- **They are in Direct violation of the 1st Amendment of the US Constitution and the State of New Mexico's Constitution**
- **They will allow religious indoctrination of students in public schools. This will not necessarily be YOUR religion that is being taught. This also will impact any subject that relates to science (history, current affairs, etc.) Science is but the tip of the iceberg.**
- **This is encouraging bad science, and actually redefines science. This hurts students and will have a negative impact on how the rest of the world sees New Mexico – e.g., reputation and economic.**

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In the Federal Trial of Kitzmiller, et.al., vs the Dover School District, et. al ., Judge John E. Jones, III, wrote in his final ruling: “An objective observer would know that ID [intelligent design] and teaching about “gaps” and “problems” in evolutionary theory are creationist, religious strategies that evolved from earlier forms of creationism.”

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“Joe Renick, with Intelligent Design Net New Mexico, says the real problem is not the science-based content, but rather evolutionists, who don't want anyone hearing an opposing view: ‘If there's no transcendent designer or creator, such as the God of Genesis, well then, that's going to say a whole lot about what this life is about and what it means.’"

Broadcast on the Family News In Focus program January, 2005. The topic was the decision by Albuquerque’s PBS affiliate, KNME, to not broadcast a DVD produced by an ID creationist group on the appropriate grounds that it was a special interest program (religious) for which PBS/KNME had no editorial control. (This is supposed to be editorial policy for all PBS stations.)

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“However we evolved, we’re here. What we evolved from we will never figure out,” Williams said. “There are many people who are absolutely convinced God did all of this and if you have the faith I have, God did it all.”

The House Joint Memorial’s Sponsor, Rep. W. C. Williams, when the memorial was tabled in the NM House on 29 January, 2007 as quoted in the Albuquerque Journal, 30 January, 2007.

RE: " 'CREATIONISM' MEASURE Tabled" article The article quotes opponents to the legislation as saying the resolution attempts to shoehorn creationism or intelligent design into science classrooms. As one of the people who helped draft the legislation, I can assure you that the resolution does no such thing. … This legislation is about intellectual freedom and teaching science objectively, not about creationism, religion or intelligent design.”

From a letter to the editor from ID creationism promoter, Michael Edenburn, in the Albuquerque Journal, 13 February, 2007

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SENATE BILL 371
48th legislature - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - first session, 2007
INTRODUCED BY
Steve Komadina

AN ACT
RELATING TO PUBLIC EDUCATION; PROVIDING FOR SCHOOL SCIENCE CONTENT STANDARDS AND RULES REGARDING THE TEACHING OF THEORIES OF BIOLOGICAL ORIGINS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

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Section 1. A new section of the Public School Code is enacted to read:

"[NEW MATERIAL] TEACHING OF BIOLOGICAL ORIGINS

[First clue – this "science bill" does NOT use Scientific terminology (biological origins), rather intelligent design creationist phraseology]

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A. The department shall adopt rules that:

(1) give teachers the right and freedom, when a theory of biological origins is taught to objectively inform students of scientific information relevant to the strengths and weaknesses of that theory

[Contrary to what the bill's proponents claim, there have been no data, experiments, hypotheses, or models put forth concerning "evidence against evolution" that have passed the standard peer review process necessary for scientific consensus. All such claims have either been soundly refuted by experts in the affected scientific fields, or do not apply, but merely use euphemisms or standard terminology in a vague or different sense. This wording, and variations, thereof, have already been ruled as synonymous with "Intelligent Design" and "religious creationism" in the Dover, PA Federal ruling in Kitzmiller, et. al. v Dover School District, et. al.]

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and protect teachers from reassignment, termination, discipline or other discrimination for doing so;

[Teachers will be in violation, of the establishment clause of the US and New Mexico Constitutions if they teach religious material is a science class as if it were science. This is grounds for any or all of the above actions, regardless of what a statute may say.]

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(2) encourage students to critically analyze scientific information

[High school students have insufficient content background to critically analyze any substantive aspects of evolution (biological origins). To be able to do this requires college level knowledge and understanding. This is pedagogically inappropriate.]

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give them the right and freedom to reach their own conclusions about biological origins and provide that no student shall be penalized in any way because the student subscribes to a particular position on biological origins.

[This is specifically addressed in the current standards, already. Students are required to learn the mainstream scientific understanding of evolution at the appropriate content level, but no student is to be penalized for disagreeing – Strand III, 9-12 Benchmark I:, #16 states: "Understand that reasonable people may disagree about some issues that are of interest to both science and religion (e.g., the origin of life on Earth, the cause of the Big Bang, the future of Earth)."]

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B. For purposes of this section:
(1) "biological origins" means the origin, history and diversity of life and living organisms;

[This explicitly singles out evolution and abiogenisis, the scientific terms, while attempting to avoid using the terminology.]

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And (2) "scientific information" means information derived from observation, experimentation and analyses regarding various aspects of the material world conducted to determine the nature of or principles behind the aspects being studied.

[To be correct, this should state “natural principles,” which is all that science can address. Science does not, by definition, address anything outside of the natural.]

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"Scientific information" does not include information derived from religious or philosophical writings, beliefs or doctrines. Scientific information may have religious or philosophical implications and still be scientific in nature." (sic)

[This definition is INCOMPLETE. Conspicuous by its absence is the requirement in science that before acceptance, the material must be peer reviewed by mainstream experts in the field. This keeps junk science out of the classroom, but does not discard tentative, new peer reviewed discoveries.]

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Thus far, the only "scientific information" that shows weakness in the science of evolution, as stated in this bill, derives from religious based ideology, contrary to what the bill implies. Contrary to what may be claimed by the bill's proponents, there have been no data, experiments, hypotheses, or models put forth concerning "evidence against evolution" that has been through the peer review process necessary to pass scientific consensus. All such claimed information has either been soundly refuted by experts in the appropriate scientific field, or does not apply and merely uses the terminology in a different sense.

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*From the ruling Case 4:04-cv-02688-JEJ Document 342 Filed 12/20/2005 Page 33 of 139 "Further evidence in support of the conclusion that a reasonable observer, adult or child, who is "aware of the history and context of the community and forum" is presumed to know that ID is a form of creationism concerns the fact that ID uses the same, or exceedingly similar arguments as were posited in support of creationism. One significant difference is that the words "God," "creationism," and "Genesis" have been systematically purged from ID explanations, and replaced by an unnamed "designer." Dr. Forrest testified and sponsored exhibits showing six arguments common to creationists. (10:140-48 (Forrest); P-856.5-856.10). Demonstrative charts introduced through Dr. Forrest show parallel arguments relating to the rejection of naturalism, evolution's threat to culture and society, "abrupt appearance" implying divine creation, the exploitation of the same alleged gaps in the fossil record, the alleged inability of science to explain complex biological information like DNA, as well as the theme that proponents of each version of creationism merely aim to teach a scientific alternative to evolution to show its "strengths and weaknesses," and to alert students to a supposed "controversy" in the scientific community. (10:140-48 (Forrest))."

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And now for a refreshing graphic. (Too many word slides can be boring.)

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(Cartoon by Dave Thomas)

The 2007 Intelligent Design Creationist Attempts at Legislating Religion Into Science Education (Annotated)

(Round 2)

SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 9
48
TH LEGISLATURE
- STATE OF NEW MEXICO -
FIRST SESSION, 2007
INTRODUCED BY
Steve Komadina

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THAT THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT ENSURE THAT TEACHERS HAVE THE RIGHT AND FREEDOM TO TEACH BIOLOGICAL ORIGINS OBJECTIVELY.

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WHEREAS, teaching some aspects of evolutionary theory causes controversy; and;

[There is no controversy within the mainstream of science with respect to whether evolution occurred or not – only with certain religious sects and proponents of intelligent design creationism]

[PS - Finally the term "evolution" is used explicitly and not implicitly.]

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WHEREAS, scientific theories of biological origins have implications that can challenge or support the personal religious or philosophical beliefs of students and their parents;

[There is only one observed phenomenon regarding "biological origins" within the scientific community expert in this area. And that is "evolutionary science." Furthermore, the current New Mexico State Science Standards require teachers to acknowledge that there may be conflicts in some religious beliefs versus the (nonsectarian) conclusions of science.]

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WHEREAS, most parents favor allowing teachers to discuss both the strengths and weaknesses of evolutionary theory when biological origins are taught; and

[This would only be relevant if 1) there were any peer reviewed scientific evidence that suggested a weakness in the science of evolution, in which case, the science would change making this unnecessary, and 2) most parents had a post secondary education in evolutionary science such that they viewed this as a "science" issue instead of a misperceived "fairness" issue.]

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WHEREAS, many credentialed scientists challenge certain aspects of evolutionary theory; and

[This is simply not true. Only a few "credentialed scientists challenge certain aspects of evolutionary theory," and of those who are "credentialed" in the field of biology, essentially all self admittedly "challenge" because of their religious beliefs. All known players who subscribe to this statement make up a significant minority (probably much, much less than 1% of those educated in biology and related fields).]

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WHEREAS, existing state law does not expressly protect a teacher's right to objectively present scientific critiques of evolutionary theory;

[Existing state law, were it to do as required by this, would be in violation of the constitution of NM and the US. Motivation and the act of teaching non-mainstream, non-peer reviewed material based on religious views as science is in direct violation of the Establishment clauses. This literally opens the door for astrology to be taught without penalty, with only a minor tie to evolution.]

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WHEREAS, existing state law does not expressly assure parents that their children will be objectively informed of scientific information relevant to biological origins;

[The existing New Mexico State Science standards already cover the "objective" teaching of information that is consensus, peer reviewed "objective" science dealing with evolution.]

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WHEREAS, existing state law does not adequately protect the rights of students to subscribe to a particular position on biological origins

[A student is in no way required to "subscribe to a particular position..." This is an absurd statement. The real issue is that the teachers recognize that students are allowed to believe anything they wish, as long as they learn the material spelled out in the state standards. This is specifically addressed in the current New Mexico State Science standards, already. Students are required to learn the mainstream understanding of evolution at the appropriate content level, but no student is to be penalized for disagreeing – Strand III, 9-12 Benchmark I:, #16 states "Understand that reasonable people may disagree about some issues that are of interest to both science and religion (e.g., the origin of life on Earth, the cause of the Big Bang, the future of Earth)."]

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WHEREAS, the trust that parents place in public education compels the legislature to take special interest in this area of public education

[This singles out evolution from all other scientific fields. The only reason to take special interest in this area is because some people believe that evolution contradicts their own, specific religious ideology. Many very religious people do not agree.];

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The rest of the Joint Memorial simply repeats the proposed bill.

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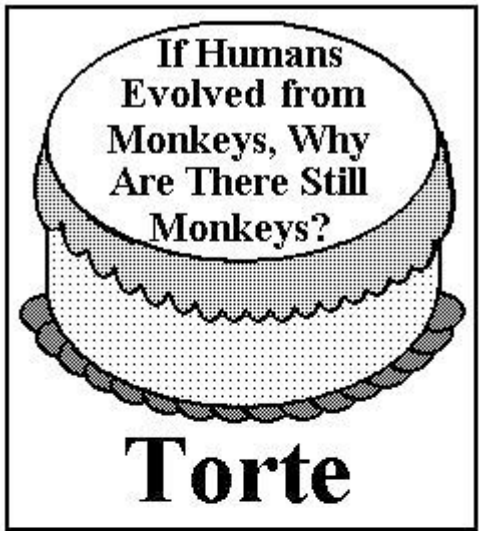

Scientific Evidence Against Evolution?

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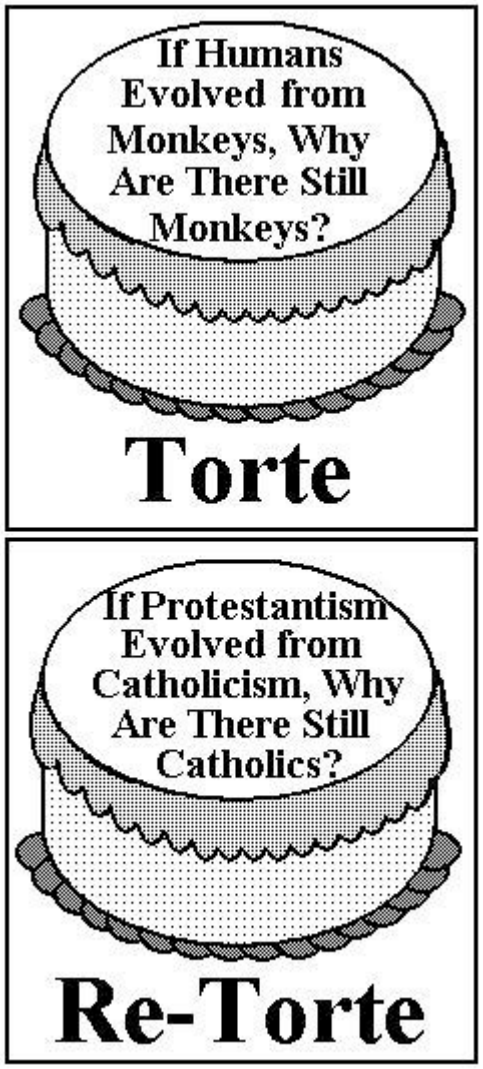

Scientific Evidence Against Evolution?

Not Exactly

(Cartoon by Dave Thomas)