Michigan Citizens for Science against the "Science" Section of HB5606

We are primarily concerned about the science section of HB5606, which doesn't seem to fit with the overall goal of the bill. Rep. Palmer told the Associated Press that the goal of the bill was "to standardize what is taught in mandated courses." For the other subjects, it appears that the bill would do exactly that and those sections generally list the subjects that must be covered in those classes. Section VII, dealing with science, differs from the rest of the bill both in detail and effect. Rather than listing the particular subjects that must be covered, this section prescribes only a vague and general requirement:

> "The course content expectations for science shall include using the scientific method to critically evaluate scientific theories and using relevant scientific data to assess the validity of those theories and formulate arguments for and against those theories."

This wording falls directly in line with the current legal strategy of the "Intelligent Design Movement" (IDM). Even before the Federal court ruling in Dover, Pennsylvania that ruled that it was unconstitutional to teach "intelligent design" in public school science classrooms, the IDM had begun to move on to a new legal strategy; rather than advocating that intelligent design be taught explicitly along with evolution, they now are encouraging school boards and legislatures to "teach the controversy" or to just teach "the arguments for and against evolution." There are numerous difficulties with this approach.

First, it conveniently ignores the fact that what the IDM has referred to as "intelligent design theory" is, in reality, nothing more than a set of arguments against evolution. There is no positive ID theory that could be confirmed with scientific research, there is only a set of arguments attempting to debunk evolution, with the assumption being that if they can knock down evolution, the only alternative left is intelligent design. All of the major ID arguments are purely negative in nature, relying upon the alleged failure of evolution as an explanation in order to make the case for design. So by requesting that the "arguments for and against" evolution be taught, they are really requesting the same thing they always have under a different name.

Second, there is no doubt that the language will essentially give permission to local school boards and teachers to use those ID arguments in science classrooms to poke holes in evolution under the guise of "formulating arguments for and against" the theory of evolution. The primary effect of this will be the opposite of that intended by the bill; that is, it will un-standardize the science curriculum as some school boards and some teachers introduce these arguments into science classrooms while others do not. The secondary, but perhaps more important, effect will be to invite lawsuits against districts that introduce this material in science classrooms.

Judge Jones' ruling in the Kitzmiller case in Pennsylvania emphatically ruled intelligent design out of public school science classrooms, but it did more than that. Judge Jones also noted that the ID movement was already changing strategies to encourage this

approach of teaching the "arguments for and against" evolution and he saw through this transparent attempt to repackage the same set of ideas. He wrote in his ruling:

> "After this searching and careful review of ID as espoused by its proponents, as elaborated upon in submissions to the Court, and as scrutinized over a six week trial, we find that ID is not science and cannot be adjudged a valid, accepted scientific theory as it has failed to publish in peer-reviewed journals, engage in research and testing, and gain acceptance in the scientific community. ID, as noted, is grounded in theology, not science. Accepting for the sake of argument its proponents', as well as Defendants' argument that to introduce ID to students will encourage critical thinking, it still has utterly no place in a science curriculum. Moreover, ID's backers have sought to a void the scientific scrutiny which we have now determined that it cannot withstand by advocating that the *controversy*, but not ID itself, should be taught in science class. This tactic is *at best disingenuous, and at worst a canard.* The goal of the IDM is not to encourage critical thought, but to foment a revolution which would supplant evolutionary theory with ID."

Those who have followed the aggressive maneuvering of the ID movement can see what is really happening in HB5606. Rep. Moolenaar recognized this himself, as he told the Associated Press last weekend that the bill "does not require the teaching of intelligent design, but that such a decision would be up to local school boards." This would open local school boards up to damaging lawsuits such as the one that prompted the Kitzmiller ruling, and as that ruling makes clear, even conservative Christian judges are able to see through the pretense of this legislative language.

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