Written by Administrator
Thursday, 30 August 2012 10:20 -

AAAS opposes Tennessee "anti-evolution" law according to the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) news release 21 March 2012, AAAS Policy Alert 19 April 2012 and AAAS Advances Monthly Newsletter, April 2012. As part of a campaign of strong opposition to a new education law in Tennessee, Alan Leshner, CEO of AAAS, has written to the Governor of Tennessee urging him to veto a bill passed by both houses of the Tennessee State legislature that allowed teachers to present "scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses" of issues that "may cause debate and disputation, including evolution and climate change". Leshner wrote: "There is virtually no scientific controversy among the overwhelming majority of researchers on the core facts of evolution and climate change, and these subjects should not be taught as if there were such a controversy. It is discouraging to see legislation that encourages teachers to help students 'critique' the 'scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses' of what are in fact well-established theories". He went on to say that the legislation denies students the ability to gain "the strong understanding of science necessary to compete for high-skill jobs in an increasingly high-tech world environment". As part of AAAS's opposition to this, and similar bills in other states, Leshner has invoked the support of "more than 12,000 Christian leaders who have signed the Clergy Letter Project in support of teaching evolution". AAAS and other science education groups such as the National Center for Science Education are also strongly opposing similar education bills in the state of Oklahoma. A group named "Oklahomans for Excellence in Science Education" commented: "This bill will harm the Oklahoma economy, bring costly lawsuits, and irreparably harm our students' education in science". In spite of the intense pressure to veto the bill the Tennessee State Governor allowed the bill to pass into law on 10 **Editorial Comment**: In Evidence News 21 March 2012 we reported a comment by one of our supporters: "Wanted to let you know that Tennessee schools received a "D" in science... 'because of lack of teaching evolution and natural selection'. Hope you can help turn that "D" into an "F". It seems the state of Tennessee has done that without our help. Over the last few years a number of state governments in the USA have proposed similar laws that have likewise been proclaimed by organisations such as AAAS as "anti-evolution bills". (AAAS Policy Alerts, 24 Jan 2011, 7 Feb 2011, 24 Feb 2011) However, if you read the actual wording of these laws you will see they are not against the teaching of evolution, but for the proper scientific analysis of it. The Tennessee law reads: "The state board of education, public elementary and secondary school governing authorities, directors of schools, school system administrators, and public elementary and secondary school principals and administrators shall endeavor to create an environment within public elementary and secondary schools that encourages students to explore scientific questions, learn about scientific evidence, develop critical thinking skills, and respond appropriately and respectfully to differences of opinion about controversial issues". Examples of "controversial issues" are listed as "some scientific subjects, including, but not limited to, biological evolution, the chemical origins of life, global warming, and human cloning". The Bill goes on to say: "Toward this end, teachers shall be permitted to help students understand, analyze, critique, and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of existing scientific theories covered in the course being taught". The Bill also states the education authorities must not prohibit teachers from "helping students understand, analyze, critique, and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of existing scientific theories covered in the course being taught. "Tennessee House Bill (HB) 368/Senate Bill 893". PDF copy available By calling these laws anti-evolution, and even anti-science, the leaders of AAAS and other secular

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education organisations have deliberately forgotten that understanding, analysing, critiquing and reviewing are the very processes that advance science, and teach students how to think about scientific ideas. To permit such activities in classrooms is not "anti" any idea. If the science teaching organisations and the Clergy Letter Project signatories looked at the history of science they would see that was because there were people prepared to analyse and critique the majority scientific beliefs of their time that stimulated research and led to advancements in science. Otherwise, they would still be teaching their students about phlogiston, and that the atom could not be split, along with many other firmly held beliefs that have been debunked because people were prepared to challenge them.

Perhaps the secular science and education groups that condemn these laws are revealing their fear that the theory of evolution might not stand up to honest scrutiny if the normal processes of scientific analysis were allowed. If evolution was such a good scientific theory it would stand up to any honest criticism, and not need politicians and lawyers to protect it. (Ref. politics, philosophy, world view)

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