



March 24, 2009

The Honorable Don McLeroy
Chairman, State Board of Education
9277 Brookwater Circle
College Station, TX 77845

Dear Chairman McLeroy,

We would like to express our support for the State Board of Education's efforts to revise the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Science. These updated curriculum standards will help ensure Texas public schoolchildren gain a solid understanding of the various science disciplines and that they can apply their knowledge and think critically about the world around them.

We believe strongly, however, that the State Board of Education should retain its nearly 20-year requirement that students analyze, review and critique scientific explanations, including hypotheses and theories, as to their strengths and weaknesses using scientific evidence and information. We are disappointed that some members of the SBOE voted in January to strip out the words “critique” and “weaknesses” from the state standards.

This issue is about whether or not Texas will continue to teach science and evolution in classrooms in the way we have for almost 20 years that allows discussion and critical questions by students. This issue is not about whether or not Evolution will continue to be taught; it will be. This issue is not about Creationism or Intelligent Design; we are not asking for those subjects to be taught.

We offer the following information to support our position:

- **80% of Americans support the “strengths and weakness” language.** 2009 Zogby poll. (86% Democrats, 83% Liberals, 73% Republicans, 72% Conservatives).
- **Evolution pioneer Charles Darwin endorsed “strengths and weakness” concept.** “A fair result can be obtained only by fully stating and balancing the facts on both sides of the question.”
- **A ban on teaching the “weaknesses” of theories is censorship, stops scientific progress.** SBOE testimony revealed that students and teachers are already being intimidated in the classroom when they ask questions about science theories. Eliminating the “weaknesses” requirement now will send a clear message that students are not allowed to raise such questions or have such scientific discussions.

- **Thousands of Texans have asked their SBOE members to support the 20-year “Strengths & Weaknesses” science standard.**
- **Over 700 Scientists worldwide support more critical analysis.**
Many Texas scientists have signed on to this statement: “We are skeptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life. Careful examination of the evidence for Darwinian theory should be encouraged.”

The history of science shows that the prevailing consensus is not always correct, therefore scientific explanations must remain open to review, critique, refinement and refutation, when necessary. Students should not be taught that some hypotheses and theories are beyond critique and question. That is what will happen if the 20-year “strengths and weaknesses” language is not maintained.

In the 81st Legislature, we support House Bill 4224 (Christian, et al.) to clarify the essential knowledge and skills of the science curriculum so that students are: “expected to analyze, review, and critique scientific explanations, including hypotheses and theories, as to their strengths and weaknesses using scientific evidence and information.”

We recognize the daunting task you face as you revise the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. Thank you for your willingness to undertake this effort to ensure our students have both the science knowledge they need and the requisite ability to analyze, evaluate, and critique sometimes competing information to draw informed, objective conclusions.

Thank you for your service to the State of Texas.

Sincerely,



Wayne Christian – Center
House District 9



Brandon Creighton – Conroe
House District 16



Linda Harper-Brown – Irving
House District 105



Dan Flynn – Van
House District 2



Ken Paxton – McKinney
House District 70



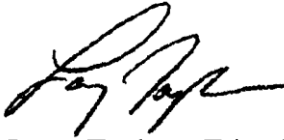
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House District 89




Tan Parker – Flower Mound
House District 63



Leo Berman – Tyler
House District 6



Larry Taylor – Friendswood
House District 24



Charlie Howard – Sugarland
House District 26



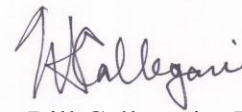
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House District 56



Sid Miller – Stephenville
House District 59



Frank Corte – San Antonio
House District 122



Bill Callegari – Katy
House District 132



John Davis – Houston
House District 129



Rob Orr – Burleson
House District 58



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Rob Eissler – The Woodlands
House District 15



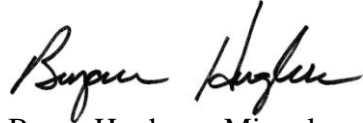
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House District 28



Betty Brown – Terrell
House District 4



Warren Chisum – Pampa
House District 88



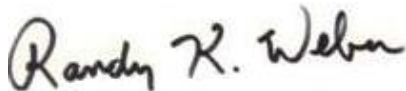
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Ken Legler – Pasadena
House District 144



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House District 20



Randy Weber – Pearland
House District 29



Carl Isett – Lubbock
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