

By: Representatives Formby, Carpenter,
Currie, Moore

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 50

1 AN ACT TO REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, SCHOOL
 2 SUPERINTENDENTS AND OTHER PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS
 3 AND PRINCIPALS TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES STUDENTS
 4 TO EXPLORE SCIENTIFIC QUESTIONS, LEARN ABOUT SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE
 5 AND DEVELOP CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS ABOUT SCIENTIFIC SUBJECTS
 6 REQUIRED TO BE TAUGHT UNDER THE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK DEVELOPED BY
 7 THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION; TO REQUIRE THESE ENTITIES TO ASSIST
 8 TEACHERS IN FINDING EFFECTIVE METHODS OF PRESENTING THE SCIENCE
 9 CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK DEVELOPED BY THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AS
 10 IT ADDRESSES SCIENTIFIC SUBJECTS THAT MAY CAUSE DEBATE AND
 11 DISPUTATION; TO PROHIBIT THESE ENTITIES FROM PROHIBITING TEACHERS
 12 FROM HELPING STUDENTS UNDERSTAND, ANALYZE, CRITIQUE AND REVIEW THE
 13 SCIENTIFIC STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF ALL EXISTING SCIENTIFIC
 14 THEORIES TAUGHT UNDER THE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK DEVELOPED BY THE
 15 STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

16 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

17 **SECTION 1.** (1) (a) The Legislature finds that an important
 18 purpose of science education is to inform students about
 19 scientific evidence and to help students develop critical thinking
 20 skills necessary to become intelligent, productive and
 21 scientifically informed citizens. The teaching of some scientific
 22 subjects required to be taught under the curriculum framework
 23 developed by the State Board of Education may cause debate and
 24 disputation, including, but not limited to:



- 25 (i) Biological evolution;
- 26 (ii) The chemical origins of life;
- 27 (iii) Global warming; and
- 28 (iv) Human cloning.

29 Some teachers may be unsure of the expectations concerning
30 how they should present information when debate and disputation
31 occur on these subjects.

32 (b) The State Board of Education, local school boards,
33 public school superintendents of schools, public school
34 administrators and principals and public school teachers shall
35 endeavor to create an environment within public K-12 schools that
36 encourages students to explore scientific questions, learn about
37 scientific evidence, develop critical thinking skills and respond
38 appropriately and respectfully to differences of opinion about
39 scientific subjects required to be taught under the curriculum
40 framework developed by the State Board of Education.

41 (c) The State Board of Education, local school boards,
42 public school superintendents and public school administrators and
43 principals shall endeavor to assist teachers to find effective
44 ways to present the science curriculum framework developed by the
45 State Board of Education as it addresses scientific subjects that
46 may cause debate and disputation. Toward this end, teachers shall
47 be permitted to help students understand, analyze, critique and
48 review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and
49 scientific weaknesses of existing scientific theories covered in



50 the course being taught within the curriculum framework developed
51 by the State Board of Education.

52 (d) Neither the State Board of Education, nor any local
53 school board, public school superintendent, public school
54 administrator or principal shall prohibit any teacher of a public
55 school system from helping students understand, analyze, critique
56 and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and
57 scientific weaknesses of all existing scientific theories covered
58 in the course being taught within the curriculum framework
59 developed by the State Board of Education.

60 (e) This section only protects the teaching of
61 scientific information, and shall not be construed to promote any
62 religious or nonreligious doctrine, promote discrimination for or
63 against a particular set of religious beliefs or promote
64 discrimination for or against religion.

65 **SECTION 2.** No later than the start of the 2016-2017 school
66 year, the State Department of Education shall notify all public
67 school superintendents of the provisions of this act. Each public
68 school superintendent shall notify all employees within the
69 director's school system of the provisions of this act.

70 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
71 and after its passage.

