

August 22, 2001

The Honorable John Boehner, Chairman
Committee on Education & the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

Dear Conference Committee Chairmen:

The undersigned scientific and educational organizations urge the Conference Committee to remove Section 1022 from the Senate-passed version of H.R.1. This Sense of the Senate resolution introduced by Senator Santorum sets a precedent of congressional involvement in the teaching of evolution, an issue that until now has been debated at state and local levels. Given the significance of such a precedent, we do not feel that adequate consideration was given to the amendment's implications before its adoption.

Those implications have become increasingly apparent in recent weeks as anti-evolution groups have hailed the amendment's passage as a major victory. The Senate vote is being portrayed as a vindication of the 1999 decision by the Kansas Board of Education to eliminate evolution from state tests. Yet Kansas citizens recognized that the Board's decision weakened science education in their state, and they repudiated the School Board vote in the following year's elections. Today, Kansas has some of the best science education standards in the country.

As written, the apparently innocuous statements in this resolution mask an anti-evolution agenda that repeatedly has been rejected by the courts. The resolution singles out biological evolution as a controversial subject but is deliberately ambiguous about the nature of the controversy. Evolutionary theory ranks with Einstein's theory of relativity as one of modern science's most robust, generally accepted, thoroughly tested and broadly applicable concepts. From the standpoint of science, there is no controversy. If the point of the resolution is to encourage teaching about *political* controversy surrounding scientific topics, then evolution is just one of a legion of issues that are the subject of political debate. It should not be singled out.

Confusing political with scientific controversy on the topic of biological evolution will weaken science education. Thank you for considering our request to remove this resolution and for your lasting commitment to ensuring that students in the nation's public schools receive the best science education possible.

Sincerely,

Louise Lamphere, President
American Anthropological Association

Oliver A. Ryder, President
American Genetic Association

Mary Pat Matheson, President
American Assn of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta

Larry Woodfork, President
American Geological Institute

Eugenie Scott, President
American Association of Physical Anthropologists

Marcia McNutt, President
American Geophysical Union

Robert Milkey, Executive Officer
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Judith S. Weis, President
American Institute of Biological Sciences

Barbara Joe Hoshiazaki, President
American Fern Society

Arvind K.N. Nandedkar, President
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Robert H. Fakundiny, President
American Institute of Professional Geologists

Hyman Bass, President
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Ronald D. McPherson, Executive Director
American Meteorological Society

John W. Fitzpatrick, President
American Ornithologists' Union

George Trilling, President
American Physical Society

Martin Frank, Executive Director
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Steven Slack, President
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Thomas A. Davis, President
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Richard Jones, President
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The Helminthological Society of Washington

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Gerald Wheeler, Executive Director
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Meredith Lane, President
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