

American Family Association of West Virginia

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January 8, 2003

Mr. Howard M. Persinger, Jr., President
West Virginia State Board of Education
State Capitol Complex
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

Re: Comments and Suggestions for the West Virginia SCIENCE – POLICY 2520.3
Science Content Standards and Objectives for West Virginia Schools (the “Policy”)

Dear Mr. Persinger:

I am writing to express my serious concerns about Policy 2520.3 - Science Standards, which is currently open for comment. It appears from a cursory examination of Policy 2520.3, students will be instructed only in evolutionary dogma as it pertains to origins. The policy does not mention any need for students to consider criticisms of the theory although many scientists have expressed major concern about its scientific adequacy. Furthermore, no express provision is made to discuss or permit the discussion of competing theories such as intelligent design.

Our concerns relate more to what the Policy omits to say rather than what it does say. It omits to see that origins science is conducted objectively rather than in a biased way that promotes only a naturalistic belief system.

To this end and short of revamping the standards, I propose the following amended language be added to the policy as follows:

Statement of Purpose and Intent Regarding Origins of Life

"The West Virginia standards regarding origins of life are intended to ensure that students are taught and equipped to critically examine origins theories and to identify and distinguish between scientific fact, theory, and error. There is more scientific disagreement about Darwinian evolution than about other scientific theories. Therefore, students should know about evolution and why scientists today continue to investigate, critically analyze, and in some instances, reject aspects of evolutionary theory that nevertheless continue to be taught as undisputed fact in classrooms. Teachers should also have the academic freedom to teach about, and

subject to the same rigorous examination, other origins theories such as the Design theory."

By adding this language students will be taught and equipped to critically examine origins theories and to identify and distinguish between scientific fact, theory, and error, in keeping with academic excellence and furtherance of a robust academic inquiry.

Today I received a copy of a letter from Intelligent Design network, inc. (IDnet) to Brenda West regarding the science policy. That letter identifies additional issues of a critical nature that the Department and the Board should seriously consider. We agree with the comments and suggestions in that letter. Students should not be told that life is not designed and evolutionary theory should not be addressed until they reach the age and maturity necessary to understand and comprehend the subject matter and the arguments and evidence for and against the various theories of our origin.

It is our suggestion that you give favorable consideration to both the IDnet recommendations and the above language which also addresses many of the concerns in the IDnet letter. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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cc: WV State School Board Members:

Sandra M. Chapman, Vice-President
Delores W. Cook, Member
Sheila M. Hamilton, Member

Ronald B. Spencer, Secretary
Barbara N. Fish, Member
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