

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 2nd Session of the 53rd Legislature (2012)

3 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

4 FOR

HOUSE BILL NO. 1551

By: Kern

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6 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

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8 An Act relating to schools; creating the Scientific  
9 Education and Academic Freedom Act; providing short  
10 title; stating legislative findings; directing State  
11 Board of Education, district boards of education, and  
12 certain administrators to create certain environment  
13 within schools; permitting teachers to help students  
14 understand certain information about scientific  
15 theories; disallowing State Board of Education,  
16 district boards of education, and certain  
17 administrators from prohibiting teachers from helping  
18 students understand certain information about  
19 scientific theories; providing for evaluation of  
20 students based on understanding of course materials;  
21 prohibiting penalizing of students for holding  
22 certain position on scientific theories; prohibiting  
23 certain construction; stating intent; directing State  
24 Department of Education to provide certain  
notification; directing superintendents to  
disseminate certain information; providing for  
codification; providing an effective date; and  
declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 11-121 of Title 70, unless there  
is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

1 This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Scientific  
2 Education and Academic Freedom Act".

3 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
4 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 11-122 of Title 70, unless there  
5 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

6 A. The Oklahoma Legislature finds that an important purpose of  
7 science education is to inform students about scientific evidence  
8 and to help students develop critical thinking skills they need in  
9 order to become intelligent, productive, and scientifically informed  
10 citizens. The Legislature further finds that the teaching of some  
11 scientific concepts including but not limited to premises in the  
12 areas of biology, chemistry, meteorology, bioethics and physics can  
13 cause controversy, and that some teachers may be unsure of the  
14 expectations concerning how they should present information on some  
15 subjects such as, but not limited to, biological evolution, the  
16 chemical origins of life, global warming, and human cloning.

17 B. The State Board of Education, district boards of education,  
18 district superintendents and administrators, and public school  
19 principals and administrators shall endeavor to create an  
20 environment within public elementary and secondary schools that  
21 encourages students to explore scientific questions, learn about  
22 scientific evidence, develop critical thinking skills, and respond  
23 appropriately and respectfully to differences of opinion about  
24 controversial issues. Educational authorities in this state shall

1 also endeavor to assist teachers to find more effective ways to  
2 present the science curriculum where it addresses scientific  
3 controversies. Toward this end, teachers shall be permitted to help  
4 students understand, analyze, critique, and review in an objective  
5 manner the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of  
6 existing scientific theories pertinent to the course being taught.

7 C. The State Board of Education, a district board of education,  
8 district superintendent or administrator, or public school principal  
9 or administrator shall not prohibit any teacher in a school district  
10 in this state from helping students understand, analyze, critique,  
11 and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and  
12 scientific weaknesses of existing scientific theories pertinent to  
13 the course being taught.

14 D. Students may be evaluated based upon their understanding of  
15 course materials, but no student in any public school or institution  
16 shall be penalized in any way because the student may subscribe to a  
17 particular position on scientific theories. Nothing in this  
18 subsection shall be construed to exempt students from learning,  
19 understanding and being tested on curriculum as prescribed by state  
20 and local education standards.

21 E. The provisions of the Scientific Education and Academic  
22 Freedom Act shall only protect the teaching of scientific  
23 information, and shall not be construed to promote any religious or  
24 nonreligious doctrine, promote discrimination for or against a

1 particular set of religious beliefs or nonbeliefs, or promote  
2 discrimination for or against religion or nonreligion. The intent  
3 of the provisions of the act is to create an environment in which  
4 both the teacher and students can openly and objectively discuss the  
5 facts and observations of science, and the assumptions that underlie  
6 their interpretation.

7 F. By no later than the start of the 2012-2013 school year, the  
8 State Department Education shall notify all district superintendents  
9 of the provisions of the Scientific Education and Academic Freedom  
10 Act. Each superintendent shall then disseminate to all employees  
11 within the district a copy of the provisions of the act.

12 SECTION 3. This act shall become effective July 1, 2012.

13 SECTION 4. It being immediately necessary for the preservation  
14 of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is hereby  
15 declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and  
16 be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

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