

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 2nd Session of the 55th Legislature (2016)

3 HOUSE BILL 3045

By: Kern

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6 AS INTRODUCED

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

21 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
22 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 11-121 of Title 70, unless there
23 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:
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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 weaknesses of existing
6 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 weaknesses of existing scientific theories pertinent to the course
13 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 2016-2017 school year, the
8 State Department of Education shall notify all district
9 superintendents of the provisions of the Scientific Education and
10 Academic Freedom Act. Each superintendent shall then disseminate to
11 all employees within the district a copy of the provisions of the
12 act.

13 SECTION 3. This act shall become effective July 1, 2016.

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

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