



October 17, 2007

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the more than one million members and activists of People For the American Way (PFAW), I urge you to oppose the FY08 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education appropriations bill (S. 1710) earmark that directs funds to the religious right organization called the Louisiana Family Forum “to develop a plan to promote better science education.”<sup>1</sup>

The mission of the Forum, a close associate of the rightwing organizations Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council, is “to persuasively present biblical principles in the centers of influence on issues affecting the family through research, communication and networking.”<sup>2</sup> This includes advocating for the teaching of the religious doctrine of creationism in the science classroom, and advocating for Bible-based addenda to state-approved science textbooks. But such teachings would be unconstitutional. As the Supreme Court held in *Edwards v Aguillard*, 482 U.S. 578 (1987), creationism is a religious doctrine and cannot properly be taught as science in a public school. Congress should not, and cannot properly, fund an organization that advocates for religious instruction attempting to masquerade as science.

It is also noteworthy that another right wing organization, the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS), has praised the Forum for urging the Louisiana state board of education to encourage local school boards to adopt the NCBCPS Bible curriculum for use in its schools, a curriculum that presents the Bible from a sectarian perspective and thus cannot be taught constitutionally in a public school.

PFAW supports teaching students about religion as part of a good education. Such instruction can and does take place in appropriate courses such as comparative religion, the history of religion, world history, and American history. Such instruction can also include instruction about the Bible and other faith documents. But efforts to inculcate students with particular sectarian beliefs and to pass these beliefs off as science have no place in our public schools and, in fact, endanger the religious liberty of all students.

Federally funding the Forum, whose activities, we believe, are specifically geared toward circumventing the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment by creating state-sponsored religious study, would violate this religious liberty. Undermining science education by teaching a religious view of the world in place of science would be inappropriate and run counter to the most basic American values.

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<sup>1</sup> See committee report at page 238, [http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110\\_cong\\_reports&docid=f:sr107.110.pdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_reports&docid=f:sr107.110.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.lafamilyforum.org/>

The separation of church and state is constitutionally required and must be respected. In order to uphold this bedrock principle, the Forum's earmark must be removed from S. 1710.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tanya Clay House". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tanya Clay House  
Director, Public Policy