



State Board of Education
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas, 78701

September 17, 2013

Dear Members of the Texas State Board of Education:

On behalf of People For the American Way's 76,590 Texas members and activists, we urge you to reject attempts to pressure textbook companies to include religiously based and politically biased information in high school biology textbooks.

Recent reports by the Texas Freedom Network indicate that the majority of panelists the Texas Education Agency chose to review high school biology texts for the state do not possess post-secondary education in biological science and that many do not have any expertise in biology at all. These panelists, instead of preparing Texas students to compete in the biological sciences, have instead demanded that biology textbooks used in public schools incorporate "biblical principles" and undermine the foundational theory of evolution.

These demands run counter to the Supreme Court's 1987 decision in *Edwards v. Aguillard*, which found that requirements that public schools teach creationism in science classes present a clear violation of the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. These efforts also undermine the ability of Texas public schools to prepare students to compete in the field of biological sciences.

Our public schools must be dedicated to providing a world-class education and equal opportunity to all children, regardless of their religious backgrounds.

We urge you to reject attempts to insert political bias and religious teachings into biology textbooks used in public schools. In addition, we hope that future textbook reviews will be conducted by those with expertise in the relevant fields.

Sincerely,

Michael Keegan
President, People For the American Way