
The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Carla S. Roberts.

DIGEST

Proposed law creates the Louisiana Academic Freedom Act.

Proposed law specifies legislative findings as follows:

- (1) The Preamble of the Louisiana Constitution declares that the promotion of education is one of the legitimate ends of government.
- (2) That the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education has promulgated the "Louisiana Science Framework" which states that "the process of scientific inquiry involves 'thinking critically and logically about the relationships between evidence and explanations, constructing and analyzing alternative explanations, and communicating scientific arguments.'"
- (3) That an important purpose of science education is to inform students about scientific evidence and to help students develop critical thinking skills that they need in order to become intelligent, productive, and scientifically informed citizens.
- (4) That the teaching of some scientific subjects, such as biological evolution, the chemical origins of life, global warming, and human cloning, can cause controversy, and that some teachers may be unsure of the expectations concerning how they should present information on such subjects.

Proposed law provides that the Louisiana Department of Education, public elementary and secondary school governing authorities, superintendents of schools, school system administrators, and public elementary and secondary school principals and administrators shall endeavor to create an environment within public elementary and secondary schools that encourages students to explore scientific questions, learn about scientific evidence, to help students develop critical thinking skills, and respond appropriately and respectfully to differences of opinion about controversial issues.

Proposed law provides that the Louisiana Department of Education, nor any school official shall not prohibit any teacher in a public school system from helping students understand, analyze, critique, and review, in an objective manner, the scientific strengths and weaknesses of existing scientific theories pertinent to the course or courses being taught. Such topics may include biological evolution, the chemical origins of life, global warming, and human cloning.

Proposed law prohibits the Louisiana Department of Education or any school official from prohibiting, censoring or suppressing writing, document, record, or other content of any material about biological evolution, the chemical origins of life, global warming, and human cloning.

Proposed law provides that the legislation only protects the teaching of scientific information, and this section shall not be construed to promote any religious doctrine, promote discrimination for or against a particular set of religious beliefs, or promote discrimination for or against religion or non-religion.

Proposed law provides that, no later than the start of the 2008-2009 school term, the state superintendent of elementary and secondary education shall notify all public school system superintendents of the provisions of this Section. Each superintendent shall then disseminate to all employees within his school system a copy of the provisions of this Section.

Effective upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Adds R.S. 17:2118)