



## Kansas Rewrites Science Standards Again

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TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Kansas has repealed public school science guidelines questioning the theory of evolution that brought the state international ridicule, but educators aren't sure how long it will be before the decision is overturned.

The State Board of Education approved new, evolution-friendly science standards with a 6-4 vote Tuesday, replacing ones that questioned the theory and had the support of "intelligent design" advocates.

The change occurred because a coalition of Democrats and moderate Republicans won control of the board from conservative Republicans in last year's election. While conservatives said after Tuesday's vote they weren't planning to reopen the debate even if elections go their way in 2008, state law will require another review of the standards by 2014.

Another shift in power is possible. The latest science standards are the fifth for the state in eight years.

"I think we're good for two years," said board member Janet Waugh, a Kansas City Democrat who supported the new standards. "Who knows what the election will hold in two years?"

The new standards reflect mainstream scientific views of evolution. The board deleted language suggesting that key evolutionary concepts — like a common origin for all life on Earth and change in species creating new ones — were controversial and being challenged by new research.

The board also rewrote the standards' definition of science, specifically limiting it to the search for natural explanations of what's observed in the universe.

Some scientists and science groups believed the board's latest action was significant because it turned back a subtle attack on evolution that encouraged schools to teach about an evolution "controversy," rather than mandating that creationism or intelligent design be taught. Intelligent design says an intelligent cause is the best way to explain some complex and orderly features of the universe.

The board's vote came a day after the 198th anniversary of Darwin's birth, which the University of Kansas celebrated with a costume party and a showing of a pro-evolution documentary, "Flock of Dodos."

But many Kansans still harbor religious objections and other misgivings about the British naturalist's theories. The Intelligent Design Network presented petitions with almost 4,000 signatures opposing the standards the board eventually adopted.

John Calvert, a retired attorney who helped found the group, accused the board of promoting atheism. And Greg Lassey, a retired Wichita-area biology teacher, said the new standards undermine families by "discrediting parents who reject materialism and the

ethics and morals it fosters."

The state uses the standards to develop tests that measure how well students are learning science. Although decisions about what's taught in classrooms remain with 296 local school boards, both sides in the evolution dispute say the standards will influence teachers as they try to ensure that their students test well.

There were debates or legal battles in California, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Ohio, Nevada and South Carolina over evolution.

But none has inspired comedians' jokes or parodies like Kansas' ongoing battle has, such as the four-part "Evolution Schmevolution" series in 2005 on Comedy Central's "The Daily Show."

Hearings in 2005 drew journalists from Canada, France, Great Britain and Japan.