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June 8, 2009

Nina A. Ford  
State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education  
P.O. Box 94064  
Capitol Station  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9064

Dear Ms. Ford:

The American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB) opposes efforts by the Louisiana State Board of Education (LSOE) to revise Bulletin 741 — Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators that would allow local school districts in Louisiana to “promote critical thinking skills and objective discussion of scientific theories.” We strongly urge the LSOE to reconsider these revisions.

The promotion of “critical thinking” and the “objective discussion” of scientific theories are, in fact, code for the teaching of “Creationism” in science classrooms. In fact, “creationism” is not a scientific theory but a matter of faith, and it does not belong in a science curriculum.

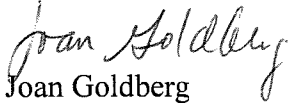
The ASCB is a non-profit, professional society of 10,000 basic biomedical researchers throughout the United States and around the world, including at Tulane University, Xavier University, and Louisiana State University. As scientists, we believe that it is critical that a basic science education include a strong understanding of evolutionary concepts. Evolutionary theory has an immense impact on everything from controlling antibiotic resistance to treating cancer, and provides a platform that helps scientists understand diseases such as diabetes, Alzheimer's, and congestive heart failure.

Darwin's theory of natural selection is a central unifying concept in modern biology. It enables scientists to explore and understand natural processes from ecology to molecular and cellular biology. Imposing the doctrine of “Creationism” in science classrooms will compromise students' understanding of modern biology and leave them with devalued academic credentials.

Promoting "Creationism" in science classrooms would also undermine Louisiana's scientific credibility, tarnish its reputation in the global scientific community, and compromise the state's ability to attract scientists and science-related industry, including the convention industry.

The American Society for Cell Biology is currently planning to hold our 2013 and 2019 Annual Meetings in New Orleans. The inclusion of "Creationism" in the science curriculum of Louisiana's schools may lead us to reconsider those plans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joan Goldberg".

Joan Goldberg

Executive Director

The American Society for Cell Biology