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For Immediate Release:

Ohio Native, Science Leader Warns “Creationism” Could Damage State Economy

BETHESDA, MD FEB. 26, 2004—Harvey Lodish, President of the American Society for Cell Biology and an Ohio native son has called on Ohio’s governor and the state’s Board of Education to reject the latest attempt by anti-evolution “Creationists” to undermine the integrity of Ohio science education. In letters to Governor Bob Taft and to all members of the Ohio State Board of Education, ASCB President Harvey Lodish, a native of Cleveland and a noted researcher at the Whitehead Institute and at MIT, today urged the state’s educational leadership to reject an anti-evolution lesson plan proposed by advocates of “Creation Science” for use in Ohio’s 10th grade biology classrooms.

“The inclusion of ‘Creation Science’ in lesson plans in the state of Ohio will damage the reputation and the economy of the state far beyond the classroom,” Lodish wrote. “This action would compromise the credibility of public education in Ohio, making it extremely difficult for the state to recruit researchers and companies in modern biology and biotechnology.”

This latest struggle over the teaching of evolution in Ohio science classrooms concerns a proposal before the Ohio Board of Education to approve a Creationist lesson plan called “Critical Analysis of Evolution” based on the concept of “Intelligent Design.” Lodish described “ID” as the religious doctrine of “Creationism” sailing under another name. By any name, these doctrines are “not science,” said Lodish. “The ideas that form the basis of these lesson plans have never been tested by any scientific peer-scrutiny or peer-review. They are religious doctrines. I respect and defend the right of any religious organization to teach these concepts to its followers, but they have no place in a lesson plan in any public school.”

The ASCB which has 11,000 members internationally and roughly 300 in Ohio went on record in 2002 during an earlier attempt by Creationists to change Ohio’s secondary school biology curriculum. A letter to Governor Taft and the state board by Nobel laureate and ASCB Public Policy Committee Chair Paul Berg of Stanford University and ASCB Public Information Committee member Tom Egelhoff of the Case-Western School of Medicine supported the Ohio board’s eventual decision to strengthen biology curriculum guidelines including the teaching of Evolution as the fundamental basis of modern biology. “This latest lesson plan is a desperate end run by Creationists,” says Egelhoff, “that threatens the future of Ohio’s secondary students and Ohio’s long tradition of scientific innovation.”

Speaking on behalf of the national ASCB, President Lodish told the Ohio Board of Education, “I urge you to keep religion and science separate and reject the inclusion of these unsound and anti-scientific plans in the education of Ohio students.” Lodish was born in Cleveland, attended Cleveland Heights public schools and graduated from Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, before pursuing graduate studies at Rockefeller University. Lodish has been on the biology faculty of MIT since 1968 and was a founding member of the Whitehead Institute in 1982. He became president of the ASCB in January. Lodish maintains ties to his native state as a Member and former Chair of the Advisory Board of the Lerner Research Institute of the Cleveland Clinic and as a Member of the Kenyon College Board of Trustees.

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The complete text of ASCB President Harvey Lodish's letter to Governor Taft can be found at: <http://www.ascb.org/publicpolicy/taft04.htm>

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