



Posted on Thu, Feb. 06, 2014

Missouri bill would let parents pull kids from evolution classes

By ALLISON PRANG
Special to The Star

Parents would have to be notified of upcoming evolution coursework in their children's science classes and given the option to pull them out under a bill pending in the Missouri General Assembly.

Rep. Rick Brattin, a Harrisonville Republican, said forcing students to study the natural selection theories developed by Charles Darwin a century and a half ago can violate their religious faith.

"It's an absolute infringement on people's beliefs," Brattin said.

Critics of the bill say it would allow religious faith in biblical explanations to crowd out sound science.

But Brattin told of emails sent to him about kids ridiculed at school for not believing the material being taught.

"Even though what's being taught is just as much faith and, you know, just as much pulled out of the air as, say, any religion," he said.

Brattin said he believes in microevolution — the idea that organisms evolve to adapt to their environments. But he doesn't buy the mainstream scientific theory of macroevolution, which traces the evolution of distinctly new species.

The perennial debate over evolution received fresh attention this week in a debate at the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Ky., between Bill Nye, known for popularizing science education, and Ken Ham, the museum's founder.

David Evans, the executive director for the National Science Teachers Association, said discussion of evolution by natural selection is critical to science education.

"Evolution by natural selection is the unifying principle in the study of biology," he said.

To extract schoolchildren from evolution classes would make it more difficult for American schools to keep pace with science education internationally, Evans said.

"Would you want to pull your child out of class if you didn't like grammar?"