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South Dakota's [Senate Bill 55](#) [4] passed the Senate on a 23-12 vote on January 25, 2017, "despite guidance from the State Department of Education, state school boards, school administrators, teachers and scientists," [according](#) [5] to the Sioux Falls *Argus-Leader* (January 25, 2017).

If enacted, SB 55 would provide, "No teacher may be prohibited from helping students understand, analyze, critique, or review in an objective scientific manner the strengths and weaknesses of scientific information presented in courses being taught which are aligned with the content standards established pursuant to § 13-3-48 [the section of the state code that governs the state education standards revision cycle]."

Although no specific scientific topics are mentioned, the language of the bill matches the language in bills aimed at evolution and/or climate change, including South Dakota's SB 114 in 2015. And the sponsorship is similar: Jeff Monroe (R-District 24), a sponsor of SB 55, also sponsored SB 112 in 2014, which would have prevented school boards and administrators from prohibiting teachers from teaching "intelligent design."

Troy Heinert (D-District 26), who voted against the bill in the Senate and previously in the Senate Education Committee, commented, "With the passage of this bill, that teacher hired by the school district to teach what the school board deems appropriate could go off on other tangents and there would be no way that the principal who does the evaluation by law would have to either reprimand them or bring

them in."

Describing the bill's language as "unclear and flabby," NCSE's Glenn Branch told the *Argus-Leader* that SB 55's passage could allow teachers to present creationism, climate change denial, or white supremacy with impunity. He also observed that local school boards could be put in a legal bind whether or not they tried to prevent maverick teachers from miseducating their students about science, warning, "This is a recipe for legal disaster."

SB 55 now proceeds to the South Dakota House of Representatives, where Blaine Campbell (R-District 35), Julie Frye-Mueller (R-District 30), Tim Goodwin (R-District 30), Leslie J. Heinemann (R-District 8), and Taffy Howard (R-District 33) are its sponsors.

[Updated January 25, 2017, with the addition of the penultimate paragraph.]

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