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## ["Strengths and weaknesses" nixed in Texas again](#) [3]



The Texas state board of education again narrowly voted against a proposal to restore the controversial "strengths and weaknesses" language to the set of state science standards now under review. As the *Dallas Morning News* (March 26, 2009) [reported](#) [4], "Board members deadlocked 7-7 on a motion to restore a long-time curriculum rule that 'strengths and weaknesses' of all scientific theories — notably Charles Darwin's theory of evolution — be taught in science classes and covered in textbooks for those subjects. Voting for the requirement were the seven Republican board members aligned with social conservative groups. Against the proposal were three other Republicans and four Democrats." A final vote is expected on March 27, 2009, but the outcome is not likely to change. It remains to be seen whether the board will vote to rescind the flawed amendments undermining the teaching of evolution proposed at the board's January 2009 meeting.

The debate is attracting national attention, with the *Wall Street Journal* (March 23, 2009) [quoting](#) [5] NCSE's Steven Newton as saying, "This is the most specific assault I've seen against evolution and modern science," and the *Washington Post* (March 24, 2009) editorially [urging](#) [6], "The Texas State Board of Education must hold firm to its decision to strip the 'strengths and weaknesses' language from the state's science standard. Texans, like everyone else, are free to believe what they want, but in science class, they should teach science." Closer to home, the *Dallas Morning News* (March 25, 2009) editorially [commented](#) [7], "Doubting evolution shouldn't be Texas' legacy. More importantly, our students should not be subject to an erroneous line of teaching," and reminded its readers that because Texas is such a huge market for textbooks, "what happens in Texas doesn't stay here."

Writing in the *Guardian* (March 26, 2009), Jerry Coyne [echoed](#) [8] the sentiment: "What happens in Texas doesn't stay in Texas. That state is a sizeable consumer of public school textbooks, and it's likely that if it waters down its science standards, textbook publishers all over the country will follow suit. This makes every American school hostage to the caprices of a few benighted Texas legislators." ([House Bill 4224](#) [9], introduced in the Texas House of Representatives on March 13, 2009, would, if enacted, require the Texas state board of education to restore the "strengths and weaknesses" language in the Texas state science standards.) A professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolution at the University of Chicago, Coyne is the author of [Why Evolution is True](#) [10] (Viking, 2009), which NCSE's Eugenie C. Scott recently [praised](#) [11] in *Nature* as "a good choice to give to the neighbour or teacher who wants to know more about evolutionary biology."

NCSE's Joshua Rosenau and Eugenie C. Scott are in Austin for the meeting; both testified on March 25, 2009. Detailed, candid, and often uninhibited running commentary on the proceedings is available on a number of blogs: [Texas Citizens for Science](#) [12]'s Steven Schafersman is blogging and posting photographs on the *Houston Chronicle's* [Evo.Sphere blog](#) [13], the [Texas Freedom Network](#) [14] is blogging on its [TFN Insider blog](#) [15], and NCSE's Joshua Rosenau is blogging on his personal blog, [Thoughts from Kansas](#) [16] (hosted by [ScienceBlogs](#) [17]). For those wanting to get their information from the horse's mouth, [minutes](#) [18] and [audio recordings](#) [19] of the board meeting will be available on the Texas Education Agency's website. NCSE's previous reports on events in Texas are [available](#) [20] on-line, and of course NCSE will continue to monitor the situation as well as to assist those defending the teaching of evolution in the Lone Star State.

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