

Why teaching evolution is still difficult in many public schools

[November 12] marked the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in Epperson vs. Arkansas, which struck down the state's ban on teaching evolution.

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The Epperson ruling did not, however, end interference with the teaching of evolution. Over the years, there was a series of efforts to require that the teaching of evolution be "balanced" with alternatives dressed up to seem scientific — first biblical creation, then creation science and finally intelligent design. Each, in turn, failed to pass constitutional muster. The legal situation is clear: The government cannot prohibit the teaching of evolution nor can it require teachers to muddy the teaching of evolution by presenting non-scientific alternatives.

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And yet teaching evolution is still challenging in many communities in the United States. Opposition arises because many people mistakenly believe that accepting evolution is incompatible with their religious faith. This point of view is widespread: In a rigorous [national survey published in 2008](#), more than 20% of public high school biology teachers reported experiencing pressure to downplay evolution.

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So it is not enough to include evolution in state science standards, textbooks and local curricula. To ensure students learn about evolution, we first need teachers who have a confident grasp of evolutionary biology.

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Many states are incentivizing science teachers to achieve more rigorous qualifications, but it will take time to undo decades — generations even — of evolution avoidance.

Read full, original post: [It's still hard to teach evolution in too many public school classrooms](#)