

Evolution debate reaches South Carolina

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South Carolina lawmakers are again embroiled in the continuing evolution controversy to decide how textbooks should present scientific theory.

Supporters of two bills before the legislature claim they only want to ensure textbooks enhance students' development of critical thinking skills, The (Columbia, S.C.) State reported Tuesday.

Critics say "critical thinking skills" are code words for inserting religious theories like intelligent design into biology lessons.

"On one hand, it looks completely innocuous, but if you understand the context ... it's directed at high school biology standards on biological evolution," Rob Dillon, a College of Charleston associate biology professor and president of South Carolinians for Science Education, told The State.

Supporters claim the textbook selection and evolution issues are not linked.

"They'll tell you this only deals with science and intelligent design, and this is not true," Rep. Bob Walker, R-Spartanburg, told the newspaper. "What this is doing is asking that when we look at textbooks, we look at the process a textbook uses in teaching when it comes to critical thinking and analysis."

Last fall, Walker tried unsuccessfully to revise state biology standards to

allow the teaching of alternatives to Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

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