

Texas board hears testimony on science standards

March 26 2009, By APRIL CASTRO , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- Tensions over the teaching of evolution are simmering as the State Board of Education begins the final stretch in the process of adopting new classroom science curriculum standards.

Activists on Wednesday took advantage of the last opportunity to testify on the proposed standards, which would drop a 20-year-old rule that requires both "strengths and weaknesses" of all scientific theories be taught. Critics say the requirement is used to undermine the [theory of evolution](#) in favor of religious teachings.

The standards adopted by the board will be in place for a decade and will dictate how [textbook](#) publishers cover the topic.

Protesters and activists gathered nearby, fervently arguing their sides of the debate.

"My grandfather was not a monkey!" one woman shouted at a crowd before the meeting began.

Most mainstream scientists agree that weaknesses in the theory of evolution are flimsy at best. But proponents of retaining the rule complain that the standard will apply to all [scientific theory](#) while the political debate is focused on evolution.

"I'm very concerned that some of the [State Board](#) of Education members will weaken every discipline of science if they remove the strengths and

weaknesses language," said Don McCall, an engineer and president of the Leander school board. "This is not about a narrow issue but about every discipline of science and engineering."

A panel of science teachers had recommended that the language be dropped. Board members are expected to propose amendments to try to change the proposal before they vote on Thursday.

"Some state board members pretend they know more about science than the dedicated educators who last year drafted sound standards and the distinguished scientists who support them," said Kathy Miller, president of the watchdog group [Texas](#) Freedom Network. "But this isn't a television show in which board members get to pretend they're something they're not. Maybe that's great for TV, but it's bad for education."

Federal courts have ruled against teaching of creationism and the similar theory of intelligent design in public schools.

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