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Kansas votes to restore evolution in school standards

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The Kansas Board of Education has voted to restore the theory of [evolution](#) to state school standards -- allowing questions on [Charles Darwin's](#) theories on mankind's origin to be used on state standardized tests and promoting its part in school curricula. The vote reversed a controversial 1999 decision that removed evolution from public school standards and allowed alternative theories to be taught. Many critics called this decision an embarrassment, and three of the measure's supporters were [ousted](#) from the state school board in November elections.

TOPEKA, Kansas (CNN) -- Reversing a controversial 1999 move, the Kansas Board of Education voted Wednesday to restore the theory of evolution to state school standards.

The 7-3 decision came in the wake of November elections that saw three board members ousted after voting to remove Charles Darwin's theory of the origin of mankind from public school [science standards](#) and allowing alternative theories to be taught.

"There is no doubt that we are strengthening science by our action," said board member Sue Gamble, one of those elected last year.

The 1999 vote never banned the teaching of evolution nor did it require the teaching of the biblical story of creation. But it dropped Darwin's theory from standardized tests taken by Kansas students.

Board members who favored keeping the 1999 standards argued that Wednesday's vote discounted valid scientific doubts about evolution.

"These standards are too restrictive in allowing only one view of man's origin to be taught," board member John Bacon said.

Kansas Gov. Bill Graves called the 1999 vote an "embarrassment" to the state, and it contributed to the defeat of three of its supporters on the state board. State school districts were not bound by the decision, and most ignored it, board members said -- with some stepping up their efforts to teach evolution in protest.

While much scientific evidence supports evolution, "A lot of it does not support it," said Steve Abrams, the only anti-evolution board member to be re-elected last fall. "And for us to say that we can't understand it, that we can't believe it, that we have to rely on the so-called experts, that's passing the buck."

But several among the board's majority said alternative theories of mankind's origin fell under the purview of religion, not science.



The Kansas Board of Education discusses evolution in the public schools

"We actually restored the basic definition of what science did," Gamble said. "It is the investigation of the natural world. It is not the investigation of the supernatural world."

Added board member Janet Waugh: "I don't want my children's biology teacher talking about religion."

The controversy is unlikely to die anytime soon. At a public forum in Topeka on Tuesday, more than a dozen people came forward to speak against evolution and the new science standards.

Bacon predicted after the vote that the issue would end up in court, but Abrams said he thought the matter was settled -- at least for four years, when Kansas takes up its education standards again.

"I think I will be borne out. When that occurs, I won't expect groveling -- but a simple apology will be all right," he joked after the vote.

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