

January 2, 2010

Ms. Nina A. Ford  
State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education  
P. O. Box 94064  
Capitol Station  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9064

Dear Ms. Ford:

I write to urge the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to rescind the complaint procedure that was adopted as Part E, §2304. Science Education, of *Bulletin 741*, the *Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators*, which implements the 2008 Louisiana Science Education Act (LSEA). The procedure is published in the November 2009 *Louisiana Register*. BESE should instead adopt the procedure that was recommended by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDoE) at the September 16, 2009, meeting of BESE's Student/School Performance Support Committee (S/SPSC). The procedure that BESE adopted is fashioned to meet the demands of the Louisiana Family Forum (LFF), a religious organization that has promoted creationism since its establishment in 1999. Working with the Discovery Institute, a creationist think tank in Seattle, WA, the LFF promoted and helped to pass the LSEA in 2008. Contrary to the urging of concerned citizens, BESE adopted a policy in January 2009 that was also shaped to meet the LFF's demands. With the September 2009 adoption of the current complaint procedure, the LFF now has complete control over the policymaking process with respect to the LSEA.

On September 16, 2009, when BESE adopted this complaint procedure, the only people present to speak at the meeting were creationists who favored it. Their identity as creationists has been documented by the Louisiana Coalition for Science (LCFS) at <http://lasciencecoalition.org/2009/09/30/creationists-dictate-bese-policy/>. Teachers and scientists who support teaching honest, accurate science and who opposed both the LSEA and the January 2009 policy, and who would also have opposed the complaint procedure, were not represented. The LFF stated in its September 22, 2009, *Family Facts* newsletter that "No one criticized the proposed process for handling complaints" (<http://lafamilyforum.us/FFarchives/v11i38.htm>). However, the school year was just getting under way. The reason that pro-science citizens were not at the September meeting is that ***they were at work, doing the jobs in Louisiana's public schools and universities for which the taxpayers pay them and which students and parents depend on them to do.*** They have constructive work to do and, unlike the LFF, cannot spend all their time politicking. However, their absence does not justify BESE's adoption of the complaint procedure.

There were many people on whom BESE members could have called for advice concerning the complaint procedure. BESE received dozens of letters in June 2009 from teachers, scientists, and citizens around the state and the nation urging them to reject the January 2009 policy when it, too, was posted in the *Louisiana Register*. BESE could have deferred its September 16 decision, which is skewed in favor of creationists, just as it deferred its acceptance of LDoE's recommended policy on December 2, 2008, a deferment that gave the LFF time to make changes in the policy prior to its adoption in January 2009. (See <http://lasciencecoalition.org/2009/01/25/louisiana-open-for-business/>.) BESE members could have contacted some of the many citizens who wrote to them in June and solicited their input on the complaint procedure. They could have contacted me, for example, especially since I had personally corresponded and talked by phone about the §2304 policy with Ms. Linda Johnson, former president and current member of BESE. I would have been happy at any time,

as I still am, to help them understand the nature of the attack that has been made on Louisiana science education by creationists at the LFF and the Discovery Institute.

It is important to note that, in adopting the complaint procedure on September 16, BESE members were following the advice of known creationists. All of them have a documented history of promoting creationism, which I have posted on the LCFS website at <http://lasciencecoalition.org/2009/09/30/creationists-dictate-bese-policy/>. Here is relevant information based on that post:

- LFF director Rev. Gene Mills attended the September 16 BESE meeting but did not speak. The LFF has promoted creationism on its website for years. Although he has managed to gain influence over public school science education policy, Rev. Mills's own children do not even attend public schools. The younger ones are homeschooled, and the older ones attend Christian schools ("Merry Christmas from Louisiana Family Forum," e-mail, December 22, 2009). He has no personal stake in the public school system. However, in 2007, his organization, the LFF, was slated to receive \$100,000 of public money in a federal earmark in order to further its creationist agenda in Ouachita Parish, where on November 29, 2006, the LFF persuaded the Ouachita Parish School Board to adopt a creationist "academic freedom" policy. (See the policy at <http://www.opsb.net/downloads-file-166.html>.) Fortunately, this scheme was detected in time to prevent these taxpayer dollars from being misused. At the same time, the LFF website was promoting a "battle plan to combat evolution" (New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, September 22, 2007, [http://blog.nola.com/times-picayune/2007/09/vitter\\_earmarked\\_federal\\_money.html](http://blog.nola.com/times-picayune/2007/09/vitter_earmarked_federal_money.html).) In his December 22, 2009, Christmas e-mail (referenced above), referring to the policy and the complaint procedure, Rev. Mills says that Jesus Christ is the reason that the LFF successfully secured the passage of the policy and complaint procedure: "Because of Him [Jesus Christ], LFF's accomplishments are many in 2009 . . . [We] Advanced classroom-ready Louisiana Science Education Rules through the perilous State Board of Education process!" He falsely calls the LFF's promotion of the policy and the complaint procedure "perilous," despite the fact that the LFF experienced no opposition at all from BESE members.
- Among the creationists testifying at the September 16 BESE meeting was John W. Oller, Jr. Oller's field is linguistics; he has no credentials in either biology or science education. (See his web page at <http://speechandlanguage.louisiana.edu/facultystaff/oller.shtml>.) He is a member of the "Technical Advisory Board" of the young-earth creationist Institute for Creation Research in Dallas, Texas. He wrote anti-evolution articles for ICR's magazine, *Impact*, for almost twenty years. Oller is also involved with Answers in Genesis, the young-earth creationist organization that operates the infamous "Creation Museum" in Kentucky, which has mis-educated hundreds of thousands of children. He was one of "eleven creation scientists" who attended a meeting there in 2006. (See Answers in Genesis, "The Definition of Information," at <http://blogs.answersingenesis.org/blogs/ken-ham/2006/07/19/the-definition-of-information/>.) In December 2002, he participated in the LFF's effort to have evolution disclaimers inserted into state-approved biology textbooks (*Advocate*, 12/11/2002), a move that BESE, led by then-president Paul Pastorek, who is now the Louisiana Superintendent of Education, fortunately **defeated by a 7-3 vote**. This is a move that BESE should have repeated in both January and September 2009.
- Also testifying at the September 16 meeting was Charles Voss, vice-president of the creationist Origins Resource Association, who attempted in 1994 to persuade the Livingston Parish School Board to adopt a creationist curriculum guide. (See the ORA website at <http://74.185.192.97/>. See also Barbara Forrest, "Combating Creationism in a Louisiana School System," *The Textbook*

Letter, July/August 1997, at <http://www.textbookleague.org/83combt.htm>.) Voss has written creationist textbook addendums to be used as supplements to public school biology textbooks. He has made them available at his “Text Addons” website: <http://www.textaddons.com/>.

- LFF “consultant” Darrell White, who, along with Oller, was involved in the 2002 disclaimer effort, also testified. White maintains a creationist web page, “Origins Science,” at <http://www.judgewhite.com/origins/index.html>. He successfully persuaded the Ouachita Parish School Board to adopt its creationist “academic freedom” policy in November 2006 and assists Voss in promoting Voss’s creationist textbook addendums. In his December 22, 2009, Christmas e-mail, Rev. Mills informs his readers that White continues his work “in fair treatment of origins science.” There is no such scientific field as “origins science.” This term is a euphemism for “creationism.”
- Also testifying was Dr. Wade Warren, a creationist at Louisiana College who works cooperatively with the Discovery Institute (DI), the creationist think tank in Seattle, WA, which helped write the LSEA. (See DI’s interview with Warren at [http://www.idthefuture.com/2008/06/louisiana\\_circadian\\_rhythms\\_an.html](http://www.idthefuture.com/2008/06/louisiana_circadian_rhythms_an.html).) After the legislature passed the LSEA in 2008, Dr. Warren stated, “This is great news for the science teachers in public school classrooms in Louisiana, and it’s great news for science education in the whole State of Louisiana. . . . *Not all DNA and fossil evidence support a Darwinian view of life.* This bill gives teeth to the freedom of a public school science teacher to ask their students to objectively analyze the scientific data.” (See *Christian Post*, June 17, 2008, at <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20080617/la-senate-approves-bill-promoting-critical-analysis-of-evolution/index.html>; emphasis added.) Dr. Warren is incorrect when he states that “not all DNA and fossil evidence supports a Darwinian [evolutionary] view of life.” Only creationists would make such a statement. *All scientific evidence supports the evolutionary view of life; there is no scientific evidence that points to any explanation other than an evolutionary one.* Prior to his September testimony before BESE, Dr. Warren had also assisted the Discovery Institute in March 2009 by testifying before the Texas Board of Education in favor of inserting creation code language into Texas state science standards, an effort in which creationists unfortunately succeeded. (See Discovery Institute, “Parade of Ph.D. Biologists Support Teaching ‘Strengths and Weaknesses’ of Evolution in Texas,” March 25, 2009, at [http://www.evolutionnews.org/2009/03/parade\\_of\\_phd\\_biologists\\_supp.html](http://www.evolutionnews.org/2009/03/parade_of_phd_biologists_supp.html).)
- Lennie Ditoro, who also spoke at the September meeting, testified last year in favor of the LSEA before the Senate Education Committee. Ditoro is the former head of the LFF’s “Education Resource Council.” As such, she promoted creationism on the LFF’s behalf. In 2005, she administered a flawed “academic freedom survey” to a select group of Louisiana teachers (LFF 2005 IRS 990 form). Only 277 teachers (5%) responded from a pool of more than 6,000 who received survey forms. The survey was skewed to present the appearance of confusion and intimidation among teachers about the teaching of evolution. (See the survey results at [http://www.apeleducators.org/associations/3635/files/Academic\\_Freedom\\_Survey\\_Aug\\_2005\\_DDW.pdf](http://www.apeleducators.org/associations/3635/files/Academic_Freedom_Survey_Aug_2005_DDW.pdf).) In January 2007, the American Institute of Physics’s Statistical Research Center and Government Relations Office analyzed the survey results and found the following, among other problems:

Questions are biased toward a specific answer, implying that scientific data against evolution exists. Teachers are asked if they should teach the scientific evidence for and against a theory (in this case Darwin’s) and of course they say yes. The implication is that scientific evidence

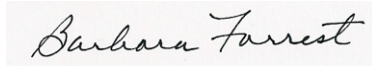
against Darwin's theory exists. That question is not asked and, if it were, the answer would overwhelmingly be no. (AIP analysis in possession of Barbara Forrest)

- Oklahoma creationist Donald Ewert was brought in from out of state to testify. He, too, like Dr. Warren, testified in Texas in favor of the creationist effort there in March 2009. (See Discovery Institute, April 3, 2009, [http://www.evolutionnews.org/2009/04/julie\\_berwalds\\_bluffs\\_refuted.html](http://www.evolutionnews.org/2009/04/julie_berwalds_bluffs_refuted.html).) Ewert is a signatory to the Discovery Institute's "Scientific Dissent from Darwinism," a document that attempts to cast doubt on the theory of evolution. (See the document at <http://www.dissentfromdarwin.org/>.) His name also appears on a list of "Intellectual Doubters of Darwinism" at the creationist IDEA Center website. (See the list at <http://www.ideacenter.org/contentmgr/showdetails.php/id/1207>.) In Oklahoma, Ewert promoted "academic freedom" legislation similar to the LSEA (S/SPSC audiotape, 9/16/09). In 2007, he wrote a favorable Amazon review of a creationist book, *The Design of Life*, which was co-authored by Discovery Institute creationists William Dembski and Jonathan Wells. (See Ewert's review at [http://www.amazon.com/review/R38TCCYI6HOGQ3/ref=cm\\_cr\\_rdp\\_perm](http://www.amazon.com/review/R38TCCYI6HOGQ3/ref=cm_cr_rdp_perm).)

The above information should be sufficient to demonstrate to BESE members that their confidence in these people is misplaced. The complaint procedure that BESE adopted is severely flawed. It solidifies the influence of the LFF over science education in Louisiana and dilutes the influence of the professional staff at the LDoE. The complaint procedure should be rescinded and replaced with the original procedure that the LDoE staff recommended on September 16.

I am happy to provide whatever information BESE members request concerning this matter. I can be contacted by phone and by e-mail at [barbara.forrest@gmail.com](mailto:barbara.forrest@gmail.com).

Sincerely,



Barbara Forrest

Cc: Ms. Jeannette Vosburg  
Executive Director  
Board of Elementary and Secondary Education