

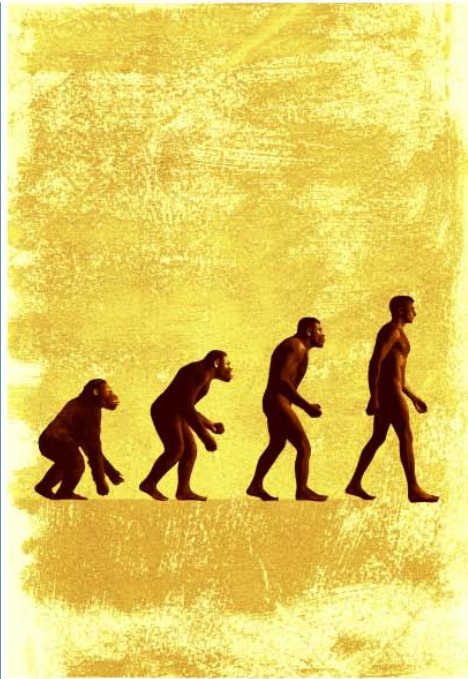
AN EVOLVING DEBATE

Should "intelligent design" be taught in science classrooms alongside the theory of evolution?

Late last year a federal judge in Pennsylvania ruled that teaching "intelligent design" in a public school biology class is a violation of the establishment clause of the First Amendment because its purpose was to promote religion.

The decision of Judge John E. Jones III in the case of the Dover Area School District did not end the controversy, however. In at least eight states, proponents of intelligent design – the idea that life is so complex it must be the work of an unspecified intelligent being – have mounted challenges to the teaching of Darwinian evolution.

Advocates of intelligent design say the idea is scientific and secular, and that including it in the biology curriculum is a more balanced way of teaching about the origins of life. Critics, who won a victory in Pennsylvania, contend it is a



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religious view, not a scientific theory, and therefore has no place in the classroom. The Supreme Court has twice ruled on related issues in recent decades. In 1968, the Court held that bans on teaching evolution are unconstitutional because their primary purpose is religious. The Court used similar reasoning in 1987 to strike down a Louisiana law that required biology teachers who taught evolution to also present evidence supporting a biblical account of creation. The Court may yet weigh in on the ongoing debate over intelligent design.

Should "intelligent design" be taught in science classrooms alongside the theory of evolution?

YES

- The Constitution protects the free exercise of religion. Permitting discussion of other views about how life began recognizes religious belief in a secular context.
- Intelligent design takes a critical look at Darwin's theory of natural selection and presents an alternate view; it does not teach religion.
- Simply discussing an "intelligent designer," or some other supernatural force, is not an endorsement of a particular religious viewpoint

NO

- Teaching intelligent design is intended to make science instruction conform to religious beliefs and therefore violates the First Amendment's Establishment Clause.
- The evidence for the theory of evolution is so conclusive that endorsing alternate views has a chilling effect on "good science" and science teaching.
- Teachers should follow the facts wherever they lead; they should not be required to expose students to any particular theory.