



Florida Academy of Sciences

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Where Science Happens

E news Edward A. Haddad, Executive Director : Julie Regier, Office Manager May 2009

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Many thanks to all of you who attended our 73rd Annual Meeting at Saint Leo University March 20-21! It was a very successful meeting at which we were joined by the Tampa Bay Section of the American Chemical Society. The staff at Saint Leo did an outstanding job of preparing for the meeting and ensuring that everything ran smoothly. We want to particularly commend Dr. Patrick Draves, Local Arrangements Chair, at Saint Leo for all of his hard work in organizing for this Annual Meeting. We also commend and thank Dr. Jeremy Montague of Barry University for his usual excellent job in serving as Program Chair and coordinator for all abstracts of papers and posters presented at the meeting. At the meeting, our President, Dr. Daniel K. Odell, turned over the gavel to our new President, Dr. Richard Turner, who is on the staff of Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne. Dr. Turner, who is the Business Manager for the *Florida Scientist* is a long-time member of the Academy, and we are glad to have the benefit of his great experience and expertise as President. Mr. David Karlen, with the Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County, was approved as our President-Elect. He will be working closely with Dr. Turner and the central FAS Office during his tenure as President-Elect. Mr. Barry Wharton was appointed as FAS Secretary, replacing the late Dr. Betty Hays, who served in that post for many years. In addition to the large number of papers presented at the Annual Meeting, we enjoyed an extensive poster session with more than 70 posters displayed. Saturday, the Florida Junior Academy of Science held its annual meeting where a number of members of the Senior Academy served as judges for the papers presented by FJAS members. Awards for presenters at the FAS meeting will be posted on our website floridaacademyofsciences.org. For those of you who did not register to attend this year's Annual Meeting, a copy of the special supplement issue of the *Florida Scientist* will be sent to you via regular mail. The FAS office remains open and active throughout the summer months should you require any of our services. Please consult the FAS website regularly for important information and news. Best wishes from us in the office to all of you during your summer break!

IN MEMORIUM

It is with regret that we announce the passing of our Secretary, Dr. Elizabeth (Betty) Hays of Barry University. She served the Academy faithfully and ably for many years and will be sorely missed. Below is a photograph of the dedication of a park in Ft. Lauderdale in Betty's memory. Her husband, daughters, and grandchildren are shown in the photo.



FROM THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

David J. Karlen, FAS President-Elect

The Academy released a position statement in March opposing Florida Senate Bill SB2396, introduced by Senator Wise of Jacksonville. The bill would have required a "critical analysis" of the Theory of Evolution in the Florida teaching standards for K-12. Similar legislation in other states is the latest tactic of "Intelligent Design" proponents to introduce creationism into the public schools. The statement was approved by the FAS membership at the annual meeting on March 20th and sent to the members of the Senate K-12 Education and Education Appropriations committees. FAS thanks Brandon Haught with the Florida Citizens for Science for his assistance in getting our statement out to the press.

FAS Position Statement on Anti-Evolution Bill

Since 1936, the Florida Academy of Sciences has represented professionals in all disciplines of science and has worked to promote scientific research and foster public and governmental understanding of science in the state of Florida. The Academy strongly supports the Florida State Science Standards for K-12 adopted in 2008, which emphasizes the importance of the scientific theory of evolution as the unifying concept in the biological sciences, and the Public Education K-12 required instruction as currently written in the Florida Statutes (s. 1003.42 F.S.).

The Academy further sees the currently proposed SB 2396 to mandate "critical analysis" of the theory of evolution in the required instruction statutes as a deliberate attempt to undermine the adopted science standards. The wording of this bill is similar to many introduced across the country at the behest of the Discovery Institute, a Seattle-based organization that explicitly promotes the teaching of scientific creationism (now packaged as "Intelligent Design") in the public schools. Similar Discovery Institute-backed legislation has already been declared unconstitutional in several other states, including the well-known *Kitzmiller et al. v. Dover Area School District* case (2005) in Pennsylvania. In the wake of the *Kitzmiller* ruling, the latest tactic of creationists has been to promote educational policies that propose "critical analysis" and similar invocations of critical thinking—specifically in connection with evolution-related science. The arguments underpinning these critical analysis policies are traceable to the primary texts of the Intelligent Design and creation science movements.

SB 2396, in effect, leaves the door open for the introduction in the public school curriculum of nonscientific and covertly religious doctrines. The proposed bill would be damaging to the quality of science education of Florida's children and the scientific literacy of our citizens. It would further undermine the reputation of our state and adversely affect our economic future as we try to attract new high-tech and biomedical jobs to Florida.

Therefore, the Florida Academy of Sciences opposes Florida Senate Bill 2396 in the strongest terms possible. We urge the Senate to reject this proposed legislation.