

OTHER VIEWS

Be fair to our children and teach real science

You are sitting at a school board meeting when a respected guest begins speaking about the science curriculum, suggesting it needs to be more inclusive. Seems reasonable, you think.

She argues that current teaching of one topic in particular ignores the views of a significant minority of experts. Be fair, teach both sides of the issue and let the students decide, she says—understanding that controversy benefits kids' educations.



JEFFREY MCKINNON

Again, you nod sympathetically. Then she gets to her main point: she believes that AIDS is not caused by the virus HIV.

Wait a minute! You're pretty sure there is plenty of evidence regarding HIV, and that old attacks on the HIV-AIDS link are discredited. Teaching this issue incorrectly could be dangerous. People who are confused about whether AIDS is caused by HIV might make bad decisions, and many would die.

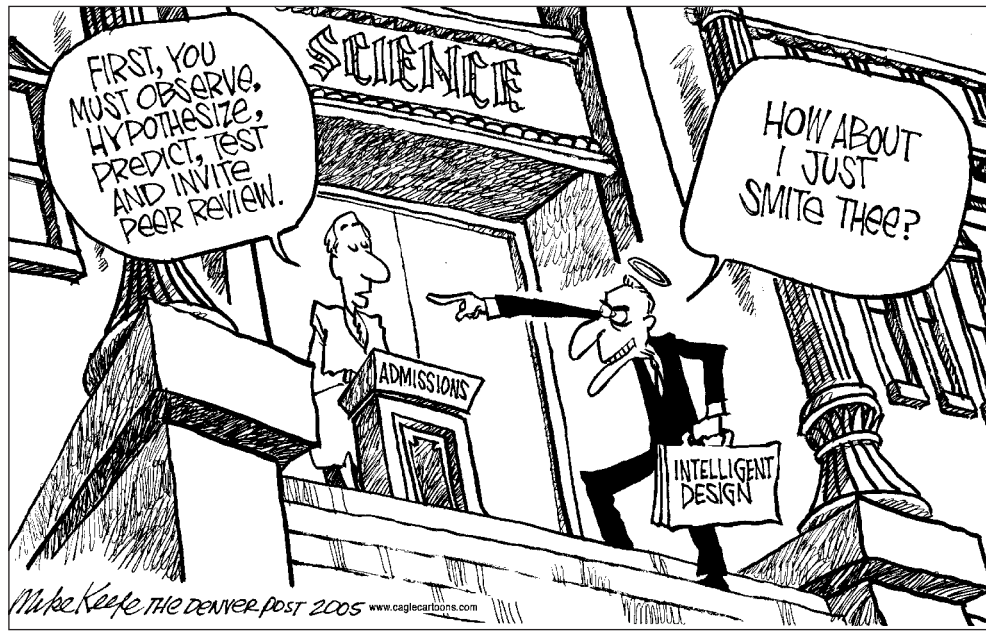
In the case of AIDS, the importance of getting the science right is obvious. But what if the issue involved subtler evidence and challenged traditions we hold dear? What if the dangers of getting the science right were not so clear? Then the appeal to the American sense of fairness would be stronger. This is the situation we find in public discussions of evolution and "in-

telligent design." Intelligent design, essentially the claim that the complexity of living organisms can only be explained if they were designed (implicitly by God), is a very appealing notion. Wouldn't it be marvelous if we could find clear evidence of God's work in nature? Wouldn't it be fantastic to find such a straightforward reconciliation of science and religion?

Unfortunately, intelligent design is too good to be true, at least from the perspective of science. The idea is an old one, dressed up with biochemistry and a new name but old nonetheless. You can find a few rare scientists who are sympathetic to "ID" but science rejected ID a century ago. I could argue the details here, but there is a simpler test: peer review, the main way that scientific work is evaluated. Only research that has been carefully reviewed and deemed competent by experts in the field gets published in top journals. The two top scientific journals, "Science" and "Nature," regularly publish articles on evolution. They never publish articles supporting intelligent design.

ID is not absent from reputable journals because of any conspiracy among scientists. Scientists, many of whom are as religious as anyone else, are open to new ideas and would love to have clear evidence for God. People who quickly accepted Einstein's notion that time is relative are pretty flexible in their worldview.

If intelligent design is based on such discredited science, why does the idea



keep reappearing? Part of the reason is because many people think evolution equals atheism. Surely, some argue, you cannot accept both God and the idea that we descended from ape-like creatures through the process of natural selection. But are evolution and a deep belief in God really so irreconcilable?

No. I could try to argue the theology, but there is more straightforward evidence that evolution and faith are compatible. Plenty of Wisconsin clergy, including Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans (lots of Lutherans!),

Methodists, Presbyterians, Unitarians and more, have no problem with evolution. So far, more than 180 clergy from Wisconsin, and more than 7,000 from around the nation, have signed a letter that includes the statement, "We believe that the theory of evolution is a foundational scientific truth, one that has stood up to rigorous scrutiny and upon which much of human knowledge and achievement rests. To reject this truth or to treat it as 'one theory among others' is to deliberately embrace scientific ignorance and transmit such ignorance to our children." Google "religion

science collaboration" and see if you know a signer.

Does any of this really matter? Teaching HIV and AIDS incorrectly could clearly cost lives and hurt our economy, but what about evolution? Should we really care whether we get that right? Yes! Design of flu vaccine is based on the careful study of rates and patterns of flu virus evolution. Ask the next pensioner you run into whether getting the flu vaccine right matters—flu kills thousands of people each year. And there's more: Steve Palumbi of Stanford conservatively estimates the cost to the U.S. economy of ignoring evolution, looking just at pesticide-resistance and drug-resistance in a few key disease-causing bacteria, at more than \$30 billion per year.

It would be nice if nature provided clear evidence of God's designs. But it does not, and we are left with our faith. For many, faith is enough—which is just as well because lives and fortunes can be lost if we confuse faith with science. So please, if you want to be fair, be fair to our kids and insist they're taught real science in their science classes.

Jeffrey McKinnon is an associate professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at UW-Whitewater and coordinator of the Undergraduate Research Program. He obtained his Ph.D. from Harvard University. His research and work on integrating research experiences into undergraduate science training are financed by the National Science Foundation.

YOUR THANKS

Twin Oaks Shelter appreciates donation

Editor, the Gazette: On behalf of Community Action, our Twin Oaks Shelter for the homeless, and the 47 adults and 36 children served by the shelter so far this year, I would like to thank the Walworth County Masonic lodges and the Burlington Masonic Lodge for their recent significant donation of food items to the shelter.

At the close of the recent Walworth County Fair, these organizations found themselves with unused milk, orange juice and other food items left over from a fair booth. Thinking immediately of their community members in need, they quickly made these items available to our residents.

Each year, about 175 people are provided with emergency shelter and access to supportive services offered by Twin Oaks as they seek to overcome challenges and barriers that have resulted in their housing crises. Consistently, there is a waiting list for people in need of the services provided by the Twin Oaks program and the need continues to grow.

Annually, Twin Oaks must raise close to \$150,000 to support the operating expenses of the shelter. We are helped in this effort by numerous volunteers, organizations, churches, businesses, foundations and individuals who provide critical financial support.

The help that Twin Oaks provides would be impossible without the generosity of many in our community, such as the Masonic lodges. We appreciate their support!

JEN TROPP
Director,
Family & Community Services
Community Action Inc.

Hurricane relief humbles organizers

Editor, the Gazette: On Aug. 31, we made a few phone calls to members of area service clubs and churches, asking for assistance in collecting food and clothing for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Not only were our pleas heard, the community of Elkhorn and neighboring towns overwhelmed us with their generosity. In less than 48 hours, we had more than 20 tons worth of donations!

Thanks to the coordinating efforts of Deanna Favre and the Brett Favre Fourward Foundation, ours were the first supplies allowed into Hancock County, Miss., the area hardest hit by the storm. We were also assured by Steve Seymoor, county supervisor, that all of these items would be distributed to the people who needed them most within 24 hours.

To all of those people who donated to our efforts, or the efforts of others, we say thanks. You humbled us with your call to action and made us very proud to be a part of this community.

STACY AND JEFF WHITEMAN
Elkhorn

How your lawmakers voted

Y - Voted yes
N - Voted no
O - Did not vote

Rep. Paul Ryan, R-1
Rep. Tammy Baldwin, D-2
Sen. Herb Kohl, D
Sen. Russ Feingold, D

JANESVILLE AREA Tally

For the week ending Sept. 9

By Thomas Voting Reports, Inc.

Y Y	Hurricane Katrina: Members approved, 410-11, nearly \$52 billion to pay for Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts over the next few weeks. This increased to \$62.3 billion the amount Congress has approved in deficit spending in response to the natural disaster. A yes vote was to pass HR 3673.
Y N	FEMA Change: Members voted, 221-193, to block a bid by Democrats to restore the Federal Emergency Management Agency as an independent agency and require "experience, knowledge, training and expertise" of the FEMA director. A yes vote was to block the Democratic bid. (HR 3669)
Y Y	U.S. Courts' Relocation: Members voted, 409-0, to allow federal courts closed by Hurricane Katrina to shift to other jurisdictions. But criminal trials must be held in the state of the crime, unless defendants waive that constitutional protection. A yes vote was to send HR 3650 to the Senate.
Y Y	Flood Insurance: Members passed, 416-0, a bill raising National Flood Insurance's borrowing authority from \$1.5 billion to \$3.5 billion to cover claims from Hurricane Katrina. The added costs will be shifted later to taxpayers or policy holders. A yes vote was to send HR 3669 to the Senate.
Y Y	Pell Grant Waivers: Members passed, 412-0, a bill giving Pell Grant recipients in areas hit by Katrina relief from a rule that requires repayment if they fail to complete a term. Pell Grants help low-income individuals pay for their higher education. A yes vote was to send HR 3169 to the Senate.
Y Y	Hurricane Katrina: Senators voted, 97-0, to send President Bush a \$51.8 billion Hurricane Katrina relief package. The largest category is \$23.2 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide food, shelter and medical care to storm victims. A yes vote was to approve HR 3673.

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■ In the week of Sept. 12, the House will take up Hurricane Katrina relief as well as the Coast Guard's fiscal 2006 budget. The Senate will debate Katrina measures and 2006 appropriations for the Justice and Commerce departments and other agencies.

Where to write
Wisconsin Governor

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Madison, WI 53707 (608) 266-1212
e-mail: wisgov@mail.state.wi.us

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YOUR VIEWS

Left is on a rampage against Ryan

Editor, the Gazette: Based on recent letters to the editor, the extreme left is apparently on the rampage against our fine Congressman Paul Ryan. No one can explain the Social Security issue more clearly than Ryan. We can no longer ignore the fact that the current system needs a major overhaul.

It's clear to me why the lefties so vehemently oppose the Ryan plan to reform Social Security (that would allow people to own personal retirement accounts): They know that if this plan is enacted, more people would view this money as something that they earned over the years. This account is something that they can pass on to their children.

In contrast, the liberals thrive on convincing more people to become even more dependent on

the government. That is why they oppose the Ryan plan for personal retirement accounts. They know that the plan's success would ultimately hurt their agenda for increased government dependency.

ROBERT TRAPP
Salem

Anti-drinking editorial gets kudos

Editor, the Gazette: Regarding your Friday editorial, "Parents must pull tap on youth drinking," bravo, bravo! Hey, all you parents out there with teenagers, have you gotten the message yet? Are you paying attention?

Don't be afraid to bring this problem out in the open and discuss it within the family. Stop sweeping it under the rug. Bravo to the writer of this editorial.

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