

## Concerned Scientists Group Opposes Indiana Senate Bill 202

We are writing on behalf of Concerned Scientists @ IU (and its student affiliate organization, Advocates for Science @ IU), a grass-roots, non-partisan community and campus organization comprising over 1000 members—scientists, students, and supporters of science—from the south-central Indiana region. While many of our members are faculty, students, or staff at Indiana University, our organization does not officially represent the University. Concerned Scientists @ IU is dedicated to strengthening the essential role of science in public policy and evidence-based decision-making.

**Our organization strongly opposes Indiana Senate Bill 202 and we are asking you to reject its passage through the House Education Committee.** Although the legislation appears to target teaching of “controversial topics” in the humanities and social sciences, we feel that the legislation would have an equally chilling effect on research and education in science and engineering. There is not a topic in the history of science—plate tectonics, the heliocentric solar system, geologic time, the theory of relativity, evolution, or the development of vaccines—that was not at some time considered controversial to some members of the broader community. In the case of evolution, politically motivated efforts to demand “equal time” in science classes for coverage of a non-scientific alternative were correctly shut down by U.S. courts. The courts understood that science develops theories to account for reproducible experimental evidence, while alternatives preferred by some are intended to manipulate evidence to support predetermined conclusions. To place decisions on the content of university science classes in the hands of a small group of appointees—with little or no expertise in the fields they are judging—places the entire academic enterprise at risk. The goal of universities is to educate students to understand the world around them by distinguishing fact from fiction, but this fundamental goal may be threatened by short-sighted legislation that limits the independence and academic freedom of Indiana’s universities.

Indiana’s “knowledge economy” is entirely dependent on the highest quality of research and education of the next generation of students. Our pharmaceutical industry depends on biomedical research and education; our automotive industry depends on state-of-the-art physics and engineering; our growing data management and analysis economy depends on high-quality computer science research. Without an unfettered access to state-of-the-art science and engineering, our faculty and students—and ultimately the communities you represent—will be the long-term losers if this bill passes. Our continued ability to recruit and retain the best and the brightest future leaders from America’s top academic institutions depends on the integrity of our universities as well as how our institutions are perceived from outside the borders of our state. This bill will ultimately diminish the stature of our educational system, the quality of our workforce, the safety of patients or consumers, and the ability of our citizens to make informed, evidence-based decisions as parents or voters.

Indiana has a great history of public education, with two major flagship university systems and a diverse range of key state universities and community colleges. We rely on your leadership to sustain and support this critical yet fragile system of higher education. As Indiana universities face a daunting “enrollment cliff” over the coming years—and our universities will be competing even more fiercely with other institutions across the region—there could not be a worse time for SB202 to become reality. We strongly urge you to oppose this dangerous piece of legislation.