

COLLOQUIUM

How are evolution and climate change being taught (or not) in schools?

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Both evolution and climate change are “controversial issues” in education, but are not controversial in the world of science. Nonetheless, every year in the United States, state legislatures contemplate bills restricting the teaching of evolution, climate change and other allegedly “controversial subjects”. Known generically as “Academic Freedom Acts”, these proposed bills direct teachers to “critically analyze” (i.e., criticize) or to present the “full range of scientific views” (i.e., include creation science and climate change skepticism) of these scientific fields. In his analysis of data collected over decades by the National Center for Science Education, Matzke traced the origin of these “Academic Freedom Acts” in his “Evolution of Antievolution Policies” in *Science*, showing that these bills are the current manifestations of the creationism and evolution controversy that has dogged American science education for over 100 years. As documented by surveys carried out by the NCSE and others, such legislation has a chilling effect on the willingness of teachers to present these topics in the classroom, and both evolution and climate change are under-taught or avoided at the pre-college level.