

# **ACLU BACKS OFF** **CHALLENGE TO** **INTELLIGENT DESIGN**

School district will inform students of alternative theories

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The American Civil Liberties Union backed off on an attempt to stop a school district from making students aware of alternative theories to evolution, including intelligent design.

The new policy by the Dover Area School District in Pennsylvania -- the first of its kind in the country -- requires teachers to read students a one-minute statement at the beginning of class, explaining evolution is a theory that continues to be tested and that alternative theories, such as intelligent design, exist.

The ACLU, along with Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, filed a federal lawsuit in December arguing intelligent design theory is inherently religious.

Wednesday, the ACLU notified a federal judge in Pennsylvania that it will not go forward with a temporary restraining order to block the policy, which will go into effect Jan. 13 with the beginning of ninth-grade biology classes.

The ACLU made its decision after reviewing documents, board-meeting minutes and several depositions of board members and the superintendent.

The lawsuit will continue with a trial later this year, but the public-interest law firm defending the school says the ACLU's unwillingness to proceed with a temporary restraining order is telling.

"Right now, it's clear the ACLU is re-evaluating the case and now looks at it as a more complex matter," Richard Thompson, president and chief counsel of the [Thomas More Law Center](#), told

WorldNetDaily.

Teachers will still teach and test on the theory of evolution according to Pennsylvania Academic Standards, but students will now be told they can find out more information about intelligent design through a book available in the school library titled "[Of Pandas and People: The Central Question of Biological Origins](#)."

The theory of intelligent design, endorsed by a growing number of credentialed scientists, says the best way to explain complex, information-rich structures observed by biologists is by the existence of a designer. Unlike creationism, however, intelligent design limits its scope to empirical observation and does not identify the designer.

The Pennsylvania school district is the first + in the country to require teachers to make students aware of the controversy surrounding evolution while specifically referring to the theory of intelligent design as an alternative.

The Dover school board voted 6-3 in October to adopt the new policy.

Thompson pointed out polls show a majority of Americans want to learn more about the scientific evidence for and against Darwin's theory of evolution.

He also noted that the Dover school policy is consistent with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, in which Congress encouraged schools to present a full range of scientific views when teaching controversial topics, citing as an example the subject of biological evolution.

Earlier this week, the [PBS station in Albuquerque, N.M., canceled a scheduled showing of a documentary on intelligent design](#), eliciting charges of "politically correct censorship."

The station says there was concern about the fact that those who funded the film have religious ties.

Seattle-based [Discovery Institute](#)'s Center for Science and Culture criticized the station for the cancellation.

"It is simply astounding that a public television station would engage in this sort of politically correct censorship," said Rob Crowther, director of communications for the organization, in a statement.

"Public television usually prides itself in exploring new ideas, not suppressing them. Doesn't anyone at KNME believe in free speech?"