

# **JUDGE REJECTS SCHOOL BOARD EVOLUTION STAND**

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*By Paul Simao*

ATLANTA (Reuters) - A U.S. judge on Thursday ordered a Georgia school district to remove stickers challenging the theory of evolution from its textbooks on the grounds that they violated the U.S. Constitution.

In a ruling issued in Atlanta, U.S. District Judge Clarence Cooper said Cobb County's school board had violated the constitutional ban on the separation of church and state when it put the disclaimers on biology books in 2002.

The stickers read: "This textbook contains material on evolution. Evolution is a theory, not a fact, regarding the origin of living things. This material should be approached with an open mind, studied carefully and critically considered."

*Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: The 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment to the Constitution says:*

*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

*The fact that a Federal Judge can say that the stickers being attached to textbooks, which only state the obvious truth (evolution is a theory in crisis with the scientific facts which refute it), are a violation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment is a proof that the judicial system of this once great country is collapsing. We are in a battle for truth, and those who love the lie are not going to give up their death grip on the evolution doll very easily. But we must continue to fight against the lie by using the truth.*

"We are pleased. The law was pretty clear," said Maggie Garrett, a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union, which sued the board on behalf of a group of parents who were opposed to the disclaimers. The ACLU argued that the school board had demonstrated a clear bias about the material, effectively pushing the teaching of creationism and discriminating against non-Christians and followers of a number of other religions.

Creationism refers to the belief that life was created by God. Evolution, which is accepted by most scientists, contends that life developed from more primitive forms and was dictated by natural selection. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1987 that

creationism could not be taught in public schools alongside evolution.

The Georgia school board, which introduced the stickers at the behest of hundreds of parents, many of them religious conservatives, contended that the stickers only advised students to keep an open mind. The board's lawyer was not immediately available for comment on Thursday.

The federal ruling came about two months after the re-election of President Bush, who won the overwhelming support of religious conservatives with his stands against gay marriage and abortion. The Cobb County case also evoked memories of the 1925 "Monkey Trial" of John Scopes, a Tennessee biology teacher who was found guilty of illegally teaching evolution.