

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 1st Session of the 58th Legislature (2021)

3 SENATE BILL 613

By: Bullard

4  
5  
6 AS INTRODUCED

7 An Act relating to school curriculum; creating the  
8 Academic Freedom Act; providing short title;  
9 providing for the creation of a school environment  
10 that encourages the exploration of scientific  
11 theories; allowing teachers to help students analyze  
12 certain scientific strengths and weaknesses;  
13 prohibiting the promotion of religious or non-  
14 religious beliefs; providing for certain  
15 notification; providing for certain immunity;  
16 providing for codification; providing an effective  
17 date; and declaring an emergency.

18 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

19 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
20 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 11-103.12 of Title 70, unless  
21 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

22 This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Academic  
23 Freedom Act".

24 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 11-103.13 of Title 70, unless  
there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

1           A. The State Board of Education, school district boards of  
2 education, school district superintendents and school principals  
3 shall endeavor to create an environment within public school  
4 districts that encourages students to explore scientific questions,  
5 learn about scientific evidence, develop critical thinking skills  
6 and respond appropriately and respectfully to differences of opinion  
7 about controversial issues.

8           B. The State Board of Education, school district boards of  
9 education, school district superintendents and school principals  
10 shall endeavor to assist teachers to find effective ways to present  
11 the science curriculum as it addresses scientific controversies.  
12 Teachers shall be permitted to help students understand, analyze,  
13 critique and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths  
14 and scientific weaknesses of existing scientific theories covered in  
15 the course being taught using evidence-based, peer-reviewed  
16 material.

17           C. Neither the State Board of Education, nor any school  
18 district board of education, school district superintendent or  
19 school principal shall prohibit any teacher in a public school  
20 district in this state from helping students understand, analyze,  
21 critique and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths  
22 and weaknesses of existing scientific theories covered in the course  
23 being taught using evidence-based, peer-reviewed material.

1 D. This section only protects the teaching of scientific  
2 information and shall not be construed to promote any religious or  
3 non-religious doctrine, promote discrimination for or against a  
4 particular set of religious beliefs or non-beliefs or promote  
5 discrimination for or against religion or non-religion.

6 E. By no later than the start of the 2021-2022 school year, the  
7 State Department of Education shall notify school district boards of  
8 education and school district superintendents of public schools in  
9 this state of the provisions of this act. Each school district  
10 board of education and school district superintendent shall notify  
11 all employees within the school district of the provisions of this  
12 act.

13 SECTION 3. A new section of law to be codified in the  
14 Oklahoma Statutes as Section 11-103.14 of Title 70, unless there is  
15 created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

16 A teacher as defined in Title 70 of the Oklahoma Statutes who  
17 complies with the provisions of this act shall be granted immunity  
18 from civil liability or termination of employment for acts described  
19 in subsection B of Section 2 of this act.

20 SECTION 4. This act shall become effective July 1, 2021.

21 SECTION 5. It being immediately necessary for the preservation  
22 of the public peace, health or safety, an emergency is hereby  
23  
24  
25

1 declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and  
2 be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

3  
4 58-1-35

EB

1/21/2021 8:38:28 AM  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25