

Idaho Legislature rejects new science standards

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Idaho lawmakers have rejected new K-12 science standards after receiving criticism over how the rules — which for the first time include global warming and evolution components— were finalized.

"Was the spirit of the law followed? I don't know," said Tim Corder, special assistant to state schools Superintendent Sherri Ybarra, to the Senate panel. "Was the letter of the law followed? Likely. But sometimes it's the spirit, not just the letter, that counts."

The Senate Education Committee spiked the proposed rules Monday after a House panel also rejected the same proposals earlier this session. The state's education department requested lawmakers kill the standards right before the panel voted to allow more time for public comment. This means state officials must start the rule-making process over again.

During Monday's meeting, lawmakers scrapped the rules with little to no discussion or any mention of the content of the new standards — even though the standards have attracted hundreds of outraged comments at the addition of evolution and the Big Bang Theory.

"Will intelligent design be given equal time and fairness next to evolution? Is evolution being taught as a theory or a fact? Would true scientist support these science standards, have any reviewed them?" asked Tammy Nichols in a public comment submitted to the department in November.

Corder later told The Associated Press that the department did not violate any laws and followed the state's rule making process.

"This is a controversial rule, we believe it is possible to involve more citizens," he said. "Give us the chance to follow a process that satisfies the people of Idaho."

Idaho's science standards have long been criticized for being too vague and lacked depth. For example, Idaho's current standards ask students in K-3 grades to "make observations" and "use cooperation and interaction skills." Under the now debunked rules, the standards called for hands-on exercises and performance expectations.

Science teachers, state officials and other stakeholders spent last summer drafting new science standards. The State Board of Education approved the rules in August.

In Idaho, legislative rules are presented to the Legislature starting in January. They carry the same force as law because they are drafted to implement state statutes. So far, this is the only rule the legislative education committee has rejected.

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