

## Statement of John Stemberger

March 12, 2008

Good morning. Thank you for coming out to attend this event. My name is John Stemberger and I am President of Florida Family Action, the lobbying arm of the Florida Family Policy Council. We represent the interests of hundreds of thousands of parents and families across Florida on a variety of social issues.

We are here today for two reasons.

First we are announcing the public support of Mr. Ben Stein for the Academic Freedom bill and to announce his lobbying efforts today on behalf of the bill. Second, we are here to clarify to the press and the public what the bill does do --and what it does not do.

I must tell you that for the past 23 years, I have served as a social activist and a legal advocate, addressing some of the most controversial and contentious issues of our day. I have addressed Issues involving sex, religion, life and death, money, power and politics. But I have never, ever, seen more hostility, more mischaracterization, more intellectual dishonesty, more bad faith and more ad hominum attacks as I have with this issue of challenging Darwinism.

As members of the press, I want to respectfully challenge you to please objectively focus on the four corners of the text of the bill. Please do not judge our motives; please do not judge our personal beliefs; or what you think our personal beliefs are. Do not judge our organizational or religious affiliations. Please *do judge* and critically analyze the text and scope of this Academic Freedom bill. Many of us here today probably hold a variety of personal views about the topic of origins ---as I am sure many of you do. But when the legislature votes, it is not going to vote on my personal opinions or your personal opinions. They are going to vote on words, the impact and the effect of this bill.

What this bill *does do* is to provide express protection for teachers who present objective, relevant and scientific evidence which is critical of chemical or biological evolution. It is very specific; it is narrowly tailored and is laser focused to provide protection for teachers who discuss a full range of scientific views regarding evolution.

The bill *does not* concern itself with “Intelligent Design” or the teaching of “alternate theories”. Let me say that again-- and emphasize it. This bill *does not* concern itself with “Intelligent Design” or the teaching of “alternate theories”. There are at least a dozen news stories I have read so far which have gotten this wrong. The bill *also does not* permit or protect the teaching of religious views of any kind, in the science curriculum.

This bill is needed because of the combination of two factors.

First, there is increasing and wide spread discrimination, hostility and intolerance toward those that express criticism of, or who intellectually dissent from Darwinism. As you will learn from the course of this press conference, it is well documented that teachers, academics and scientists who criticize Darwinism can (and often do) pay a high price.

Second, the new evolution standards that will now be taught in 2009, will be some of the most dogmatically worded of any state in the country.

These two factors, when combined together, present a new circumstance, an uncertain environment and a major question as to whether teachers are protected if they present evidence critical of Darwinism. Therefore, the Legislature needs to act now to pass this Academic Freedom Bill to protect public school science teachers.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a fact that the bio chemical theory of macro-evolution is in a state of intellectual crisis at the highest levels of science and academia. In your press packets, there is a copy of an article that came out just days ago on a recent announcement that a group of the world's top scientists, evolutionists, philosophers and academicians are gathering in Austria in July 2008 to reevaluate and come up with a *new* theory of evolution to address its problems and inadequacies. Interestingly enough, the concept they are using to describe this new explanation of evolution is what they are calling "self organization". Leading evolutionists around the world (who are intellectually honest) will tell you that there are serious problems and serious questions about the viability of theory of evolution--- the very concept we are now stuck with in our curriculum for the next ten years in Florida.

The religious, hard core, Darwinists of today historically stand in the shoes of the Flat Earth Society who refused to hear the voices of Galileo, or anyone who dares challenge the so-called "facts" of prevailing scientific models.

We contend, as we have along, that evolution should be taught in schools, but taught with both its scientific strengths *and weaknesses*. And because the new standards do not teach evolution objectively but instead as an assumed conclusion-- teachers need to know that they are protected if they criticize these dogmatic standards.