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PRESS RELEASE

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COPE RECOMMENDS AGAINST SCIENCE STANDARDS

The final draft of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) was released to the public on April 9, 2013. The “Framework for K-12 Science Education” as well as the Standards were developed from 2011-2013 by a small group of elite scientists and educators. The NGSS authors are urging all states to adopt the Framework and Standards so that all U.S. public schools will follow the same science standards from Kindergarten through high school.

Although the use of NGSS is in principle a matter of state-by-state choice, economic and other incentives may move states to accept the new standards. Twenty-six states that have been involved in the development process are expected to be among the first to seek adoption.

While NGSS is not an official part of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, the science standards were clearly written to “align” and “cohere” with existing Common Core Mathematics and English Language Arts standards. Common Core has been adopted by 45 states. If science and social studies follow this trend, then we can expect almost all public education in the U.S. to be controlled by a few people at the national level. Parents, students, taxpayers, and even state and local officials will likely have little influence over the ideas and worldviews that children will be exposed to in school.

We encourage those who may be alarmed by this prospect to educate themselves on the issues and then urge their state boards of education and legislatures to reject adoption of the NGSS Framework and Standards.

Citizens for Objective Public Education (COPE) is an educational non-profit group whose mission is to promote objectivity and religious neutrality in public school curricula that address religious questions. COPE has carefully analyzed the Framework and Standards and ***strongly recommends against their adoption.***

Our analyses may be found in our letters dated June 1, 2012 [[copeinc.org/docs/COPE-Letter-Achieve-Inc-June-1-2012.pdf](http://copeinc.org/docs/COPE-Letter-Achieve-Inc-June-1-2012.pdf)] and January 29, 2013 [<http://copeinc.org/docs/NGSSJan2013F.pdf>]. Since the public release of our letters, we have received **no comment from the NGSS authors, and none of our substantive comments and suggestions is reflected in the final Standards.**

Our key concern is that the Framework and Standards address ultimate religious questions and then use a doctrine or “Rule” that permits only materialistic or functionally atheistic answers. That is, NGSS requires a materialistic explanation for any phenomenon addressed by science. This is neither educationally objective nor religiously neutral.

The religious questions children will be exposed to are: *Where do we come from and what is the nature of life?* The only answers provided by NGSS will be functionally atheistic. U.S. courts have ruled on numerous occasions that religion includes both theistic and non-theistic beliefs. In our view the promotion of a materialistic/atheistic worldview by public education is not consistent with First Amendment principles of religious neutrality.

The Framework and Standards utilize a variety of devices to achieve this non-theistic religious effect. One is to begin to imbue the immature minds of impressionable children at the age of six in Kindergarten and to continue that program for 13 years. Another device is omission. The Standards fail to include material about legitimate scientific critiques of materialistic narratives of the origin of the universe, of life and its diversity.

COPE is not interested in banning the teaching of evolution. Rather it seeks to have origins science taught objectively so that the effect is religiously neutral. Instead of promoting only a materialistic/functionally atheistic explanation about where we come from and the nature of life, science education should focus on teaching the actual state of our scientific knowledge regarding the subject.

Also, origins should only be taught to minds that have attained the knowledge and maturity necessary to reach an informed decision about the issue. Students need to have mastered the basics of math, chemistry, physics, earth science, and probability theory to be equipped to make an informed choice.

COPE'S analysis also shows that the Framework and Standards seek to imbue students with particular political views regarding climate change, sustainability, renewable energy, and other environmental matters. They fail to present these controversial issues objectively. For example, NGSS focuses on the *negative* effects of human interactions with the environment, while downplaying activities which show responsible stewardship of the Earth. NGSS also promotes the view that manmade greenhouse gas emissions are a major contributor to global warming. This (like other aspects of climate change) is debatable, but NGSS coverage of the issue lacks the needed balance. The promotion of particular political opinions and positions should not play a role in science education.

**Parents, children, and taxpayers have a clear right to expect an objective, religiously neutral curriculum in the public schools. Accordingly, we urge all citizens and taxpayers to read our letters and educate their representatives accordingly.**