

If Teddy Roosevelt were alive today, he would never visit.

Each of us has religious beliefs and beliefs vary. Christianity isn't the only religion. And it's not DEI to treat all religions equally. It's religious freedom. Some believe in no god at all. All religious beliefs are equal under the law.

No matter what you personally believe, science is not religion. Science is based on evidence. Religion is not. To require public schools to teach as science a religious belief that a deity may have created the Earth is mandating them to teach a deity may exist. That's not science. If you want to teach religion in schools, then be brave about it, label it religion and teach the creation stories of every religion equally, and that belief in a deity is only scientific theory.

The definition of science: The systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation, experimentation, and the testing of theories against the evidence obtained. There is no continual testing and questioning of whether a religious belief is a fact. Science continually evolves and will repudiate a belief when new information is discovered. Religion never does this. It is not based on evidence that evolves.

If the bill is passed, the following will likely occur:

- A lawsuit to strip churches of tax exempt status for teaching science, not religion.
- A lawsuit to require public schools to teach the scientific creation story of all religions, not just Christianity, and to teach the scientific theory there is no deity at all.

Science does not say a deity does not exist. It's mute on the topic. It merely looks for evidence to explain what it sees, not evidence of who created it. What many Christians dislike is that science finds evidence that contradicts their personal religious beliefs. Science finds evidence the earth is billions of years old, offending many Christians who believe otherwise, without evidence.

House Majority Leader Mike Lefors says, "I believe that God created the universe and that there needs to be something in our instruction that relays that. I am a firm believer that the further we get away from God, the more difficulties our country is going to have." I respect his beliefs and his right to have them, not his right to impose them on others. Once elected to public office, he is sworn to represent all North Dakotans, not just those who share his personal religious beliefs. He sounds more like a member of the Taliban than a leading representative of a state in a democracy.

North Dakota's Constitution states, "The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall be forever guaranteed in this state. Lefors' beliefs support a preference, an infringement on others. Allow all religious beliefs in schools or allow none.

A separate bill being proposed would invalidate drivers licenses of visitors from states that don't check citizenship before issuing them. Pro tip: Other states will invalidate education credentials of North Dakotans taught that religion is science.

I was born and lived in Bismarck for 18 years, went to university in Fargo and worked in Fargo for a time after that. North Dakota once was a state guided by those who represented all residents equally. I've always intended to move back, but if this narrow view of governance persists, I will have to reconsider. Many will not want to have their children educated in this environment.