

Campaign opposes 'intelligent design' DefCon mobilizes: DefCon mobilizes

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Hundreds of clergy, scientists and academics have launched a grassroots campaign to oppose religious conservatives, beginning with concerted opposition to the teaching of "intelligent design" in public school science classes.

The Campaign to Defend the Constitution (DefCon) began publicly mobilizing September 29 for a full-fledged battle against what it considers an imminent threat to American democracy, public education and scientific leadership.

The launch of the DefCon campaign coincided with the start of a court battle in Dover, Pennsylvania, over the legality of teaching intelligent design in public schools alongside Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

The organization's first action came in the form of a joint letter to all 50 governors asking them to "protect science and to oppose inclusion of intelligent design in science curricula." The document was signed by approximately 100 clergy and 100 scientists, including pastor James Forbes of Riverside Church in New York City and C. Welton Gaddy, a Baptist pastor who heads the Washington-based Interfaith Alliance.

"The battle of intelligent design is not between those who believe in God and those who believe in science but over what is best for the education of our children," Forbes said in a statement. "Our children should learn established science in science class and take other opportunities in the school day to discuss the meaning, origins and wonder of life."

The group also compiled a list highlighting what it termed "The Top Ten Islands of Ignorance."

On the basis of legislation or school board action that endangers science, DefCon labeled in decreasing order of "ignorance": Dover, Pennsylvania; Cobb County,

Georgia; the state of Kansas; Blount County, Tennessee; the state of Ohio; the city of Grantsburg, Wisconsin; and the states of Alabama, Utah, South Carolina and Florida.

In response to the charges, Dottie Howe, spokeswoman for the Ohio Department of Education, said the state arrived at its current policy on the topic of evolutionary theory through a two-year process in which all voices were considered.

“What DefCon is referring to is a model lesson plan that suggests that teachers and students can critically analyze different aspects of evolutionary theory. In the state of Ohio we had a great debate where we reached what we consider to be a reasonable compromise,” Howe said. *-Religion News Service*