

Texas governor advocates intelligent design

January 20, 2006

Posted: 1/20/06

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By Bobby Ross Jr.

Religion News Service

AUSTIN (RNS)- A letter from Gov. Rick Perry's office advocates teaching intelligent design in public school classrooms, but Perry's office and the state school board chairwoman insist there are no plans to push for curriculum changes.

Kathy Walt, the governor's press secretary, told the Dallas Morning News Perry supports teaching intelligent design "much as the theory of evolution is now taught" in Texas schools.

Perry's position came to light because of a letter sent by his office last month to an East Texas constituent who asked the governor whether he backed teaching intelligent design, a theory that says the universe and living things are so complex an intelligent agent must be behind them.

The letter from Perry's office stated that it would be a "disservice to our children to teach them only one theory on the origin of our existence without recognizing other scientific theories worth consideration."

The letter noted a Pennsylvania federal judge's recent ruling prohibiting a

school district from requiring teaching intelligent design probably would be appealed.

“Once the courts have spoken with finality and clarity, Texas schools will abide by that decision,” the letter said.

But Walt said the governor’s office was merely responding to a constituent’s question and has no plans to seek legislation that would require teaching intelligent design in science classes.

“We try to respond to all letters that ask the governor’s positions on issues,” Walt said.

“He has always supported providing students with alternative theories as part of the effort to teach critical and analytical thinking skills.”

Tincy Miller, chairwoman of the Texas State Board of Education, noted that board members voted in November 2003 against endorsing only biology textbooks that presented the most qualified characterizations of evolution, with words such as “may” or “could.”

“We had a huge discussion; it was just put to bed,” Miller told the Austin American-Statesman. “We teach evolution in Texas.”

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