

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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June 8, 2017

SENT via U.S. Mail and Email: Rep.Kremer@legis.wisconsin.gov

The Honorable Jesse Kremer
Wisconsin House of Representatives
59th Assembly District
PO Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Re: Unfit to help govern Wisconsin public schools and universities

Dear Representative Kremer:

On behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation and our 29,000 nonreligious members nationwide, including 1,300 Wisconsin members and members in your district, we write to express our grave concern about your official remarks as a member of the Wisconsin State Assembly's Committee on Colleges and Universities, to espouse creationism.

At a May 11 public hearing about AB299, the Campus Free Speech Act, you and Rep. Rebecca Berceau engaged in a lively debate. One exchange, regarding speech about the "controversies of the day" and the debatability of facts, culminated with you declaring that it is a fact that the Earth is 6,000 years old:¹

Berceau: If a geology student says 'I'm sorry, but the Earth is only 6,000 years old,' rejecting science that says the Earth is considerably older than that, is it not okay for the professor to tell that student they're wrong? When the student is saying based on religious beliefs that the Earth is only 6,000 years old in the bible, can a professor tell a student in that case, 'no, you're wrong,'?

Kremer: This bill stays out of the classroom. Yes, the Earth is 6,000 years old. That's a fact. But we can discuss that outside of this room.

Berceau: You do believe it's a fact that the Earth is only 6,000 years old?

Kremer: I do.

It was a stunning moment. Rarely do we see ignorance spoken into a microphone, on the record, with such pride and unjustifiable confidence by a public official. You reject unanimous scientific consensus in favor of a book with talking snakes,² dragons,³ magic wands,⁴ and witches and wizards,⁵ yet lacks the coherence and charm of *Harry Potter*.

This is particularly incongruous, given that your entire life relies on a foundation of science. The same science and technology that inform us that the Earth is more than 4 billion years old dictates your life, from your time as a pilot to your website design and aerial photography businesses to the mobile phone in your pocket. You feast on the fruits of science, yet openly

reject the same science that contradicts a book written when the earth was still “flat” and when demonic spirits “caused” diseases.

Worse, the bible does not actually say that the Earth is 6,000 years old. That figure comes from Bishop Ussher who, in the year 1650, most absurdly, attempted to calculate the age of the Earth by adding up the ages of all the people in the Old Testament and working backwards. Ussher came up with October 23, 4004 as the day the biblical chronology begins. There is no science in this attempt to understand our world and it turns out to be off by a factor of more than a million.

Your exchange was all the more stunning because it is a nearly perfect example of life imitating art. In the pivotal courtroom scene in the play, *Inherit the Wind*, a fictionalized retelling of the already dramatic Scopes Monkey Trial, Henry Drummond, the Clarence Darrow character, questions Matthew Harrison Brady, the William Jennings Bryan character, about the age of the Earth:

Brady: I know. The Bible gives a fine account of the flood. But your professor is a little mixed up on his dates. That rock is not more than six thousand years old.

Drummond: How do you know?

Brady: A fine biblical scholar, Bishop Ussher, has determined for us the exact date and hour of the Creation. It occurred in the Year 4,004 B.C.

Drummond: That's Bishop Usher's opinion.

Brady: It is not an opinion. It is literal fact . . .

At this point, it might be useful to actually define the word “fact.” A fact is not something that is believed. A fact actually has to be supported by evidence, and in the case of a scientific fact, be verifiable, testable evidence. Simply because you believe the Earth to be 6,000 does not make it so. As John Adams said during another famous trial, over soldiers involved in the Boston Massacre: “Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.”

It is due to the unfortunate sabotage of the study of evolution in our nation by creationist lobbyists and public officials, such as yourself, that the United States ranks next to last in western countries on public acceptance of evolution, beating out only Turkey, but worse than Malta, Poland, Croatia and a host of nations with less economic strength than the United States. This widespread ignorance, with studies consistently showing about half of Americans reject the fact of evolution, gives our nation a black eye. We risk making the United States, or the Wisconsin State Legislature, a global laughingstock. Understanding evolution is absolutely fundamental to any comprehension of biology. This religious blindfold jeopardizes our country's standing in a global market, since comprehension of evolution is fundamental to progress in medicine, pharmacy, agriculture and biotechnology.

As you know, courts have long held that your benighted religious rejection of science cannot be taught in public schools, including public universities.

You are free of course, as a private citizen to advise and direct Christian schools, one of which apparently mishandled your scientific education.

But you are clearly unfit to sit on the Assembly's Committee on Colleges and Universities and we hope you'll have the decency to step down. We look forward to your response.

Very truly,



Dan Barker & Annie Laurie Gaylor
Co-Presidents
DB/ALG:als

¹ Video of the May 11, 2017 Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities is available from Wisconsin Eye at <http://www.wiseeye.org/Video-Archive/Event-Detail/evhdid/11544>. The exchange takes place from about 150:30 to about 151:45.

² Genesis 3.

³ Revelation 12, 13.

⁴ Exodus 4.

⁵ Exodus 22, Revelation 21, Leviticus 19, 20.