

Note: The plaintiff in this case, Larry Caldwell, contacted Discovery Institute and asked us to post this press release for him. This is Caldwell's press release not Discovery Institute's.

News Release

For IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Parent Files Lawsuit Against Roseville High School District For Violation of Civil Rights During Evolution Debate

SACRAMENTO -- California parent Larry Caldwell has filed a civil rights lawsuit in federal court against the Roseville Joint Union High School District and school officials alleging that his constitutional rights to free speech, equal protection and religious freedom were violated in the course of his year-long effort to improve the teaching of evolution in his district.

"I tried to exercise my basic rights as a citizen to propose a new idea, and school officials responded by suspending normal procedures, publicly attacking my personal religious beliefs, and even threatening to sue me to stop me from speaking out," reported Caldwell. "These are tactics you'd expect in a banana republic, not the state of California."

Caldwell proposed in 2003 that school officials adopt his Quality Science Education (QSE) Policy and related instructional materials aimed at changing how the theory of evolution is taught in biology classes by including presentation of scientific weaknesses of evolution in biology classes. Currently, only the scientific strengths of evolution are taught in biology classes, with no discussion of the scientific weaknesses or criticism of evolution.

"Instead of following normal procedures and reviewing the QSE Policy and instructional materials on their scientific and educational merits," said Caldwell, "school officials did everything in their power to prevent any meaningful consideration of my proposals, systematically violating their own stated policies in the process."

Examples of the school district's pattern of misconduct include:

*** School board member James Joiner attempted to intimidate Caldwell and other parents from exercising their free speech rights by asking the school district attorney to investigate filing a lawsuit against Caldwell to stop him from speaking out.

***At an open meeting held to hear parental input on school curricula, school officials without any justification banned parents from speaking in favor of Caldwell's proposed policy on evolution.

***For eight months, district officials repeatedly refused to put the QSE Policy on the school board agenda, contrary to California state law and the U.S. Constitution. (According to a federal court ruling, California citizens have an absolute right to place items on the agendas of a local school board.)

***School district officials illegally used their positions to try to discredit and defame Caldwell by publicly attacking his personal religious beliefs and by spreading false rumors about Caldwell. For example, at one point the district falsely claimed that Caldwell had asked a school official to distribute a religious tract at a school district meeting. (The school district later admitted that the allegation was false.)

"School officials repeatedly acted as if free speech rights and other constitutional guarantees applied only to those who agreed with them," said Caldwell.

Caldwell's federal civil rights lawsuit asks the court to reform the District's practices to ensure that citizens of all political viewpoints and religious beliefs will be able to enjoy their constitutional right to bring education policy proposals before the school board and other school officials on an equal basis, without illegal discrimination.