



Report on 2009 Zogby Poll about Evolution and Academic Freedom

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Executive Summary

Happy Birthday, Mr. Darwin: Growing Majority of Americans Support Teaching Both Sides of Evolution Debate

Just in time for Charles Darwin's 200th birthday and the 150th anniversary of his *Origin of Species*, a new nationwide Zogby poll of likely voters indicates overwhelming public support for teaching the scientific evidence for and against Darwin's theory. The poll shows similar overwhelming support for giving students and teachers the academic freedom to discuss the "strengths and weaknesses" of evolution.

According to Discovery Institute's Dr. John West, the poll results may shatter some preconceptions held by those in the media about *who* supports letting students hear a balanced presentation on Darwinian theory.

"Media reports insinuate that a right-wing conspiracy of know-nothings and religious extremists is afoot," said West. "But the new Zogby poll reveals a broad-based and well-informed public consensus for academic freedom on evolution. That consensus includes Democrats, Republicans, liberals, moderates, independents, and every race, gender, and age group. The Darwin Lobby has isolated itself from public opinion."

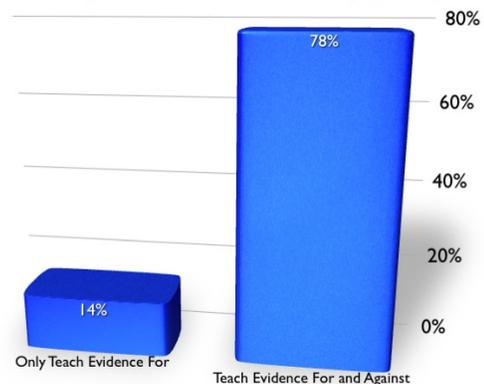
According to the poll, Democrats (82%) and liberals (86%) are even more likely than Republicans (73%) and conservatives (72%) to support the academic freedom of teachers and students to discuss the "strengths and weaknesses of evolution."

The poll also shows a dramatic 9-point increase over 2006 in the percentage of likely voters who agree that "Biology teachers should teach Darwin's theory of evolution, but also the scientific evidence against it." Support for that position has jumped to 78%, up from 69% in 2006. The percentage of likely voters who favor teaching only the evidence *for* evolution suffered a corresponding decline of 7 points, from 21% in 2006 to just over 14% this year.

"Clearly, the Darwin-only crowd is losing public support," said West. "There seems to be a backlash against the strong-arm tactics that have been used in recent years to censor and intimidate scientists, teachers, and students who raise criticisms of Darwin."

Zogby International conducted the survey of 1,053 likely voters from 1/29/09 through 1/31/09. A more detailed summary of the poll results follow, and selected demographic data and cross-tabs are available on request.

Support For Teaching Evidence For and Against Darwin's Theory (2009)



Dramatic Increase in Support for Teaching Scientific Evidence Both For and Against Darwinian Evolution

QUESTION: I am going to read you two statements about Biology teachers teaching Darwin's theory of evolution. Please tell me which statement comes closest to your own point of view—Statement A or Statement B?

Statement A: *Biology teachers should teach only Darwin's theory of evolution and the scientific evidence that supports it.*

Statement B: *Biology teachers should teach Darwin's theory of evolution, but also the scientific evidence against it.*

Statement A	14%
Statement B	78%
Neither	5%
Other/Not sure	2%

A large majority (78%) say Statement B, “Biology teachers should teach Darwin’s theory of evolution, but also the scientific evidence against it,” comes closest to their point of view, while 14% say Statement A, “Biology teachers should teach only Darwin’s theory of evolution and the scientific evidence that supports it” comes closest to theirs.

The majority supporting teaching both sides of the evolution debate jumped by 9 points since 2006, when this question was last asked:

Results from Zogby nationwide poll in 2006

Statement A	21%
Statement B	69%
Neither/Other/Not sure	10%

Random sample of 1,004 likely voters. Conducted by Zogby International on Feb.27-Mar. 2, 2006. Margin of error +/-3.2%.

Over the past three years, supporters of Darwinian evolution have insisted that there is no scientific evidence critical of Darwin’s theory to present to students. They also have claimed that the *Kitzmiller v. Dover* intelligent design trial settled this issue and so there should be no more debate about how evolution is taught in public schools. ***But the public has not been convinced. Indeed, support for the Darwinists’ position has dropped significantly while support for teaching the controversy over evolution has risen.***

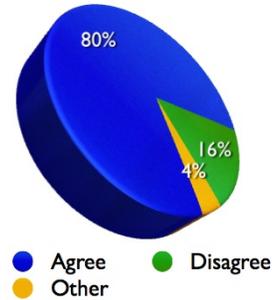
Notably, according to the new poll, young adults are far less likely than any other age group to favor a one-sided approach to teaching evolution. When asked if they agreed with the statement that biology teachers should teach “only Darwin’s theory of evolution and the scientific evidence that supports it”—the position typically advocated by pro-Darwin activists and academic partisans—0% agreed among those in the 18-24 year-old age bracket!

Poll Shatters Stereotypes with Revelation that Democrats Favor Freedom to Discuss Evolution's Strengths and Weaknesses More Overwhelmingly than Republicans

QUESTION: *Would you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree that teachers and students should have the academic freedom to discuss both the strengths and weaknesses of evolution as a scientific theory?*

Strongly agree	54%
Somewhat agree	26%
Total Agree	80%
Somewhat disagree	6%
Strongly disagree	11%
Total Disagree	16%
Not sure	4%

Students/Teachers Should Have Freedom to Discuss Strengths and Weaknesses of Evolution

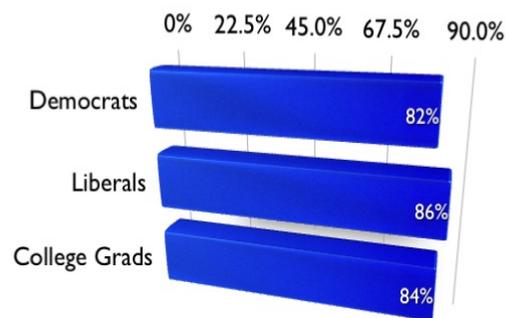


A large majority of respondents (80%) agree that teachers and students should have academic freedom to discuss both the strengths and weaknesses of evolution as a scientific theory, with more than half (54%) saying they strongly agree. Only 16% disagree.

Although the media consistently portray support for the freedom to discuss both sides of the evolution debate as coming primarily from conservative Christians, these poll results show something far different and will shatter some preconceptions about who supports letting students hear a balanced presentation on Darwinian evolution. It turns out that:

- **Democrats** (82%) support giving teachers and students the freedom to discuss Darwinism's "strengths and weaknesses" even more overwhelmingly than Republicans (73%).
- Self-identified **liberals** (86%) favor the freedom to discuss evolution's "strengths and weaknesses" more than conservatives (72%).
- **College graduates** (84%) support the freedom to discuss evolution's "strengths and weaknesses" more than those without a college degree.
- Individuals identifying with no Christian or Jewish denomination favor the freedom to discuss evolution's "strengths and weaknesses" by nearly 82%.

Support for Student/Teacher Freedom to Discuss Strengths & Weaknesses of Evolution



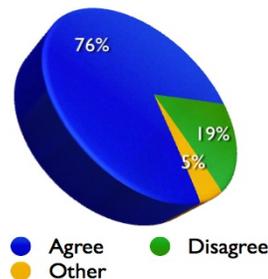
Clearly, support for the freedom to teach the controversy about Darwinian evolution cuts across religion, party affiliation, political ideology, and educational levels.

Americans Agree with Darwin that the Only Fair Way to Evaluate His Theory Is by “Fully Stating and Balancing the Facts and Arguments on Both Sides of Each Question.”

QUESTION: Charles Darwin wrote that when considering the evidence for his theory of evolution, “...a fair result can be obtained only by fully stating and balancing the facts and arguments on both sides of each question.” Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with Darwin’s statement?

Strongly agree	45%
Somewhat agree	31%
Total Agree	76%
Somewhat disagree	6%
Strongly disagree	12%
Total Disagree	19%
Not sure	5%

Only Fair Way to Evaluate Evolution Is To Consider Facts and Arguments on Both Sides



Three-quarters (76%) say they agree with Darwin’s statement, while about a fifth (19%) say they disagree.

At a time when Darwin’s words and ideas are being showcased, it is interesting that his own support for academic freedom and freedom of scientific inquiry is largely being ignored by the media and downplayed by the scientific community. Darwin famously wrote in *On the Origins of Species* that when considering the evidence for evolution, “a fair result can be obtained only by fully stating and balancing the facts and arguments on both sides of each question.” **More than three-fourths of respondents said they agreed with Charles Darwin’s statement.** This is in line with the results for each of the other questions supporting teaching both the evidence for and against evolution.

Methodology

Zogby International conducted an omnibus telephone survey of likely voters from 1/29/09 through 1/31/09. The sample is 1,053 likely voter interviews with approximately 44 questions asked. Samples are randomly drawn from telephone CDs of national listed sample. Zogby International surveys employ sampling strategies in which selection probabilities are proportional to population size within area codes and exchanges. Up to six calls are made to reach a sampled phone number. Cooperation rates are calculated using one of AAPOR’s approved methodologies¹ and are comparable to other professional public-opinion surveys conducted using similar sampling strategies.² Weighting by region, party, age, race, religion, and gender is used to adjust for non-response. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups. Some reported results may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

¹ See COOP4 (p.38) in *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates of Surveys*. The American Association for Public Opinion Research, (2000).

² *Cooperation Tracking Study: April 2003 Update*. Jane M. Sheppard and Shelly Haas. The Council for Marketing & Opinion Research (CMOR). Cincinnati, Ohio (2003).