

Senator cuts \$100,000 from creationist group: Earmark was for Louisiana Family Forum

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Bowing to pressure, Republican senator David Vitter of Louisiana has backed off an attempt to steer \$100,000 to a Christian group that supports teaching religious and alternative theories of creation alongside evolution in science classrooms.

Vitter has taken heat from educational, religious and civil rights groups for earmarking money for the Louisiana Family Forum in a fiscal 2008 spending bill—a bill intended “to develop a plan to promote better science education.”

The group has long challenged Darwinian theories explaining the origins of life, and the earmark was seen by some as an attempt to inject Christian doctrine into the classroom.

On the Senate floor October 17 Vitter announced that “to avoid more hysterics,” he wanted to shift the money to science and computer labs in schools in Ouachita Parish. He said the earmark had been misconstrued.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State was among more than 30 groups that banded together to call for the earmark to be stripped. The coalition included the Anti-Defamation League, the American Association of School Administrators and the National Center for Science Education.

The Louisiana Family Forum was launched in Baton Rouge nine years ago by then-state representative Tony Perkins, who now serves as president of the Family Research Council, a national Christian right advocacy group. The Family Forum’s stated mission is “to persuasively present biblical principles in the centers of influence on issues affecting the family through research, communication and networking.” *—Religion News Service*