NEW ORLEANS (AP) — "Creationism" comes before 1925 backwoods Tennessee in one of those legal fights focused on a side issue instead of the real issue.

The quarrel will not deal with whether the law violates the Constitution by forcing public schools to teach "creation science," which critics say is simply religion thinly disguised.

There will be no argument on a question, still hot in fundamentalist religious areas — was this world and everything on it created out of nothing by a "supreme being" about 6,000 years ago or did everything gradually evolve over millions of years? Creationism says a "supreme being" did it all.

"Monkey Trial" held in the 1925 backwoods Tennessee town of Dayton to test the state's law against teaching the theory of evolution.

However, these seven justices are cautioned to concentrate only on whether "creation science," which critics say is simply religion thinly disguised. There will be no argument on a question, still hot in fundamentalist religious areas — was this world and everything on it created out of nothing by a "supreme being" about 6,000 years ago or did everything gradually evolve over millions of years? Creationism says a "supreme being" did it all.

"Balanced Treatment for Creation-Science and Evolution-Science Act," has been under suspension, awaiting final legal decision since it passed the 1981 Legislature. It requires that the "supreme being" concept be given equal time in the classroom with the theory of evolution.

A coalition of clergymen, teachers, parents and educational, scientific and religious organizations represented by the American Civil Liberties Union filed suit in federal court claiming the law violates the Constitutional requirement of separation of church and state among other things.

The outcome here may not be a final decision on Louisiana's creationism law — the only one in the nation since Arkansas' law, a much broader version, was struck down by a federal judge.

If the justices rule that the State Attorney General — Wendell R. Bird, an Atlanta lawyer who specializes in defending creationism, emphasized to the justices that they play a peripheral role.

Bird told them this case does not involve whether the state law violated the First Amendment "and does not involve any science or religious questions related to creation-science or evolution-science, which are issues solely for the U.S. District Court to determine."

State Attorney General William Guste named Bird a special assistant attorney general for the handling of this case.

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