Creationism Bill Signed By Treen

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) - Louisiana students must be taught a Biblical version of man's creation whenever they study the theory of evolution, under a bill signed into law Tuesday by Gov. Dave Treen.

But even Treen said he had reservations about the "scientific creationism" law. "To be honest, I am not free of doubt about my decision," Treen told a news conference. There could be some complications down the road.

The legislature took effect immediately from the American Civil Liberties Union, which announced plans to challenge the law in court as an unconstitutional intrusion of religion into state affairs.

The legislation takes effect in the 1982 school year, and makes Louisiana the second state with a "creationism" law. A recently passed Arkansas law is also being challenged in court.

Louisiana state Sen. Bill Keith of Mooringsport, a Methodist lay minister who helped the bill through the legislature, said he was delighted that Treen had signed it.

"I think his decision represents the viewpoint of the majority of people in Louisiana," he said. "The legislature spoke overwhelmingly in favor of teaching both concepts of origins. So I think the government has made a very wise decision.

"The reason he spent so much time on this was because we have provided him with all the materials relative to scientific creationism, which shows scientific creationism to be pure science and not religion, as has been asserted by many columnists and editorial writers."

The measure had strong backing from fundamentalist Christians in north Louisiana - Keith's home region.

State Superintendent of Education Kelly Nix - an outspoken opponent of the measure - said the law could cost Louisiana $8 million to replace textbooks.

"It's a religion. It should be taught in the church and in the home, not in the classroom," he said.

Nix said he would not permit the use of "rinky dink" creationism texts - mimeographed sheets or pamphlets - which Keith says could adequately supplement existing texts.

Nix also said the law would give take away his department's responsibility for setting curriculum standards and give it to local school boards.

The ACLU said the measure violated First Amendment guarantees of separation of church and state.

"There is no doubt that so-called creation science necessarily includes the religious belief in a supernatural creator," said volunteer lawyer Carolyn Miller. "It is therefore outside the realm of science."

She said the ACLU had not settled its legal plans, but was considering a request for an injunction in the courts.

Lawmakers and educators who opposed the bill said it would force teachers to explain creationism every time they mentioned something that conflicts with the Bible.

Treen, however, said in a four-page statement that the bill was widely misunderstood and vague in its definitions.

The law defines creation science as "the scientific evidence for creation and inferences from those scientific evidences."

Although it mentions "balanced treatment," Treen said it specifically permits a teacher to provide whatever information "the teacher determines is necessary and appropriate to provide insight into both theories."

Treen said also that the bill, as written, does not ban any textbooks and simply permits competing theories to be covered.

"The bill does not require the imposition of any theory or belief on any student," he said.