Creationism Repeal
Rejected By House

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) - The law requiring the balanced treatment in public schools on the subject of the creation is still on the books although it’s never been enacted.

The House of Representatives on Monday overwhelmingly rejected the Senate-passed bill that would have repealed the 1981 measure.

The law, which tells teachers they must give information on creationism if they discuss evolution, is tied up in a New Orleans federal court.

The American Civil Liberties Union filed suit to scrap the law and no court date has been set.

Louisiana is the only state in the nation with such a law.

Arkansas passed one but the law was stricken by a federal judge, who ruled that scientific creationism was no more than the Biblical version of the world's beginning. The law violated the separation of church and state clause of the U. S. Constitution, the Arkansas judge ruled.

At least half of the House membership wasn't paying attention during most of the debate and about a dozen members were joking about the bill.

At one point when Rep. Alphonse Jackson of Shreveport - a proponent of repeal - was at the microphone, Rep. Charles DeWitt of LeCompte walked up to him, clapped his hands and shouted, "tell 'em about it brother." DeWitt walked away laughing.

Before a vote was taken to cut off debate, Rep. James David Cain of Dry Creek asked House Speaker John Alario if the speaker would let the House go home early if members voted to end the discussion.

"I'm just trying to cut a deal," laughed Cain.

The speakers on the measure had a great deal of trouble getting attention from the membership.

"I am a hard shell, shouting Baptist but we need to repeal this law," said Jackson.

"This isn't an argument for evolution or for creation science. You don't have to decide if you are for God or whether you came from a monkey. The Legislature is trying to dictate curriculum and that is wrong. The law is a violation of the separation of church and state." Rep. Quentin Dastugue of Metairie said most major churches in Louisiana, including the Roman Catholic Church, the National Baptist Convention, Presbyterians and others, oppose the law.

The only textbook available to teach scientific creationism is published by "a rinky dink university or something in San Diego, California," said Rep. Terry Gee of Gretna, noting that Louisiana would have to spend $7 million at the least to buy the textbooks.

The House was in no mood to hear prolonged debate and ended it before opponents of the bill had a chance to speak.

One of the few who spoke was Rep. John Travis of Jackson, who offered an unsuccessful amendment that would have prohibited public school teachers from giving instruction in evolution.

"We don't need none of that," he said. "They ought to be teaching reading, writing and arithmetic."

Rep. Manny Fernandez of Chalmette begged for repeal, saying by keeping the law now in litigation, "we're making ourselves the laughing stock of the nation just so we can call ourselves Christians.

We can be Christians without this law.

The vote for repeal was 26-61. Fifty-three votes were required to repeal the law.