



US Congressional leader castigated for creation comments

25 April 2002

Tom DeLay, a blunt-spoken conservative congressman from Texas USA and the third-ranking member of the US House of Representatives, stirred up a hornets' nest with his recent comments about schools that fail to teach creationism. DeLay was speaking at a Baptist church near Houston, Texas. A parent, after complaining that too few universities teach creationism, asked him for suggestions on colleges.

'Don't send your kids to Baylor [a Texas university]. And don't send your kids to [Texas] A&M,' DeLay answered, to vigorous applause. 'There are still some Christian schools out there—good, solid schools. Now, they may be little, they may not be as prestigious as Stanford, but your kids will get a good, solid, godly education.'¹ Sound advice, courageously spoken.

Barry Lynn, a long-time opponent of DeLay who directs Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, launched the initial attack against the congressman's comments. Lynn's group sent a tape of DeLay's speech, which had been secretly recorded, to the *Houston Chronicle*. Lynn claimed:

'As a major player in American politics, Mr. DeLay seems to be willing to even undercut what are recognized as high-quality universities just to push his religious agenda, which includes his opposition to evolution. Teaching about God in private universities is fine, but to think you can introduce religious doctrine in state universities is a clear violation of the principle of separation of church and state.'

Teachers and alumni also leapt to the defense of their schools. Both universities are widely respected in the state. Baylor University is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and claims to be 'the largest Baptist university in the world,' while Texas A&M University has a reputation for conservative traditions.

Baylor spokesman Larry Brumley scolded the congressman: 'We are extending an invitation to Mr. DeLay to visit the campus and see first-hand the nature of this university, its students, faculty and staff,' Brumley said in a statement. 'I believe he will find an institution, as stated in our recently adopted 10-year vision, that is seeking to enter the top tier of American universities while reaffirming and deepening its distinctive Christian mission.'

Yet Baylor said nothing about past controversies over its position on evolution (see [Baptist school afraid of creation](#) and [Saddened by university's stance on creation](#)). A university can have the best reputation in the world, but if it undermines the authority of Genesis and unlocks the door for students to reject Biblical authority, then its prestige doesn't matter.

Feeling the heat, DeLay issued an apology in the *Houston Chronicle*, claiming that his comments about Baylor and A&M were taken out of context:

'My response to a concerned parent has created a misunderstanding. I was giving advice for the specific type of education they were seeking for their child. Let me make it Texas clear: I've been a longtime supporter of Baylor and Texas A&M. My daughter went to A&M and in Congress I've worked hard to help fund these two prestigious universities. I apologize for any misunderstandings my comments may have caused.'²

Rep. DeLay is widely admired among US Christians on the 'religious right' for his stands on traditional values. He was one of several speakers at the Worldview Weekend conference, held on 12–13 April 2002 at First Baptist Church in Pearland, Texas. The purpose of these national conferences is to exhort Christians to base their thinking on the Bible—in every detail of their lives.

DeLay in the hot seat before

This is not the first time that DeLay has gotten into trouble for his bold comments related to the teaching of creation and evolution. Following the massacre of students at Columbine High School in Colorado, USA, in 1999, DeLay stood on the floor of the US House and read an editorial that listed evolution-based teaching among the culprits: '... our school systems teach our children that they are nothing but glorified apes who have evolutionized out of some primordial soup of mud, by teaching evolution as fact.'³

This oft-quoted statement is highlighted on the Web site promoting the recent *Evolution* PBS-TV series. The entry reads, 'The tragedy at Columbine High School leads to a general outcry that teenagers in America have lost their moral bearings. In Congress, conservative Republican Rep. Tom DeLay of Texas links this moral decline specifically to the teaching of evolution'⁴

In spite of efforts to discount DeLay's views as 'outrageous,' parents have good reason to be concerned about the teaching of evolution, which undermines faith in the Bible and destroys the moral foundation of nations. We share the concern of Christians worldwide who want to find colleges that teach the real history of Genesis.

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1. The story first appeared in the *Houston Chronicle*, and all quotations in this article are taken from this source, unless otherwise noted: Nissimov, R., Don't send your kids to Baylor or A&M <<http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/story.hts/metropolitan/1371848>>, 18 April 2002. The story was later picked up by the *Washington Post*, Cooperman, A., DeLay criticized for 'only Christianity' remarks <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A18077-2002Apr19.html>>, 19 April 2002, and by other media. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)
 2. Nissimov, R., Comment about Baylor, A&M misunderstood, DeLay says <<http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/story.hts/metropolitan/1373540>>, 19 April 2002. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)
 3. This quotation has been falsely attributed to Tom DeLay. It first appeared as a letter to the editor of the *San Angelo Standard-Times* (Texas, USA), 27 April 1999, and DeLay quoted the letter on the floor of the US House of Representatives. See [DeLay floor speech on youth violence](#).[\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)
 4. You can find this quotation in the 1999 entry of the *Evolution* Web site's timeline showing the rise of evolutionary teaching. The timeline is titled '[Evolution Revolution](#).'[\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

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