

Poole Bills ^[1]

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Poole Bills

by Jerry Leath Mills, 2006

See also: [Teaching of Evolution](#) ^[2]

The [Poole Bills](#) ^[3], also called "Poole Monkey Bills," were a series of attempts in the 1920s by [General Assembly](#) ^[4] member [D. Scott Poole](#) ^[5] to outlaw the teaching of evolution in state-supported schools. If the Poole Bill were passed, it would have required that all teachers in the state sign a pledge stating that they believed "in the being of Almighty God" and ensured a prison sentence for any teacher convicted of teaching evolution in a state school.

Inspired by actions of the Tennessee legislature that precipitated the infamous [Scopes Trial](#) ^[6] of 1925, and backed by fundamentalist forces centered around a committee of 100 churchmen of the North Carolina Presbyterian Synod, Poole introduced his first bill in 1925 and saw it defeated by a narrow margin. In February 1927 Poole's bill was reintroduced and defeated in committee by a margin of 25 to 11 after a rousing speech by Paul J. Ryan, a law student at the [University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill](#) ^[7]. Victory for the bill's opponents was widely attributed to some presentations and debates in [Charlotte](#) ^[8] sponsored by former students of [Horace Williams](#) ^[9] (1858-1940), the controversial philosophy professor at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Additional Resources:

The Evolution Controversy in North Carolina in the 1920's, UNC Libraries: <https://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/exhibits/show/evolution/introduction> ^[10]

Primary Sources: <https://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/exhibits/show/evolution/primarysources> ^[11]

Glossary: <https://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/exhibits/show/evolution/glossary> ^[12]

References

"Will Compromise Bill on Evolution Be Introduced?" *The Concord Daily Tribune*, February 4, 1927. <https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn92073201/1927-02-04/ed-1/seq-1/> ^[13]

Linder, Suzanne Cameron. "William Louis Poteat and the Evolution Controversy." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 40, no. 2 (1963): 135–57. <https://login.proxy171.nclive.org/login?url=https://www.jstor.org/stable...> ^[14]

Subjects:

[Law and legal history](#) ^[15]

[N.C. Industrial Revolution \(1900-1929\)](#) ^[16]

[Religion](#) ^[17]

Authors:

[Mills, Jerry Leath](#) ^[18]

From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[19]

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Links

[1] <https://www.ncpedia.org/poole-bills>

[2] <https://www.ncpedia.org/evolution-teaching>

[3] <http://www.lib.unc.edu/ncc/evolution/poolebill.html>

[4] <https://www.ncpedia.org/general-assembly>

[5] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/poole-david-scott>

[6] http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/library/08/2/1_082_01.html

[7] <https://www.ncpedia.org/university-north-carolina-chapel-hi>

[8] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/charlotte>

[9] http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/w/Williams,Henry_Horace.html

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