

Texas School Standards: Age of the Universe Erased

April 7 2009, by Miranda Marquit



Texas school standards next attack: Removing references to the age of the universe. Image source: NASA Hubble Space Telescope.

(PhysOrg.com) -- The fight over the new education and curriculum standards for the public schools in Texas has been long and publicized. Most of the publicity, though, focuses on the school board's focus on ["intelligent design" as it relates to the biological question of evolution](#). Because evolution has long been contested in public schools, it is no real surprise that this has gotten the most play from the media. But one thing that hasn't been mentioned as much is the fact that the Texas school standards also remove mention of the age of the universe. Long-standing ideas of cosmology are being challenged as well.

Originally in the Texas school standards was this phrase: "concept of an expanding [universe](#) that originated about 14 billion years ago." However, board member [Barbara Cargill](#) thought this wasn't good enough. It was too definite. The standards now read, "current theories of the evolution of the universe including estimates for the age of the universe." You can bet that the age of the [earth](#) is not listed in the Texas curriculum as about 4.5 billion years old -- in spite of the fact that most of the people my age and older have known (or rather, estimated) this for years.

There certainly are many different theories about the formation of the universe. Whether it was a [big bang](#) or a big bounce are two of them. Cosmologists and astronomers wonder about the rate of expansion in the early universe, and they debate the effects of gravity (not to mention its nature) as well as consider questions about the composition of the universe and the kinds of particles that exist. However, despite the questions that do exist about the origination of the universe, there is very little debate about its *age*.

Right now, the latest estimate is that the universe is 13.73 billion years old, plus or minus 120 million years. This information is the latest from results from the [Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe \(WMAP\)](#). While the age of the universe is likely to be fine tuned in coming years, it is extremely likely that it will remain in the neighborhood of 14 billion years. And few scientists see the age of the earth being cast in doubt as well. But it appears that [cosmology](#) could now be thrown into the fray of science v. religion.

Until now, matters of space have been very little addressed in terms of religion. After all, couldn't God have created the universe well before putting humans on Earth? But it appears that by working from Earth outward, some are becoming concerned. If God created humans on Earth just a few millennia ago, then Earth can't be 4.5 billion years old. And if Earth isn't as old as all that, surely the universe isn't, either. It's an

interesting train of logic. And one that could result in all we know about space science being brought under attack.

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