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Norma Gabler, the conservative textbook activist, died on July 22, 2007, at the age of 84, in Phoenix, Arizona. Born Norma Elizabeth Rhodes in Garrett, Texas, on June 16, 1923, she married Mel Gabler (1915-2004) in 1942. The couple was known for their critiques of textbooks used in Texas's public schools. They began to scrutinize textbooks for hints of "secular humanism" in 1961, after finding errors in one of their son's textbooks. The Gablers formally incorporated the nonprofit Educational Research Analysts in 1973, which presently describes itself as "an original contribution to the Christian conservative intellectual renaissance." Norma Gabler was the public face of ERA -- the obituary in *The New York Times* (August 1, 2007) [noted](#) [4], "Mrs. Gabler, always with a smile and careful, precise diction, usually testified at textbook hearings rather than her shyer husband, Mel" -- although the current president of ERA told the *Times*, "Mr. Gabler wore the pants in that family, and Mrs. Gabler wanted it that way."

Evolution, of course, was among ERA's targets. The *Times* obituary quoted a 1982 article in *Creation/Evolution* by Steven Schafersman [describing](#) [5] the Gablers as "the most effective textbook censors in the country." In 1969, the Gablers convinced the Texas Board of Education to remove the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study textbooks from the list of textbooks approved by the state, and in 1974, the Texas Education Policy Act adopted their suggestion that biology texts prominently display a description of evolution as theory rather than fact. Thanks both to changes in the Texan political landscape and opposition from groups such as the Texas Council for Science Education, ERA's influence waned somewhat in the 1980s. Yet Norma Gabler herself was on hand during the latest round of biology textbook adoptions in 2003, and the organization is expected to be similarly active during the next round, presently not expected to begin until 2009 at the earliest.

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