



Published on NCSE (<https://ncse.com>)

[Home](#) > "I'm Not A Scientist, Man": How Not To Dodge A Question



[1]

SHARE TWEET EMAIL [PRINT](#) [2]

[Anti-evolution](#) [3], [Attack on science education](#) [4], [Climate change](#) [5], [Climate change denial](#) [6]

[Josh Rosenau](#) [1]

05.30.2014

["I'm Not A Scientist, Man": How Not To Dodge A Question](#) [7]

In late 2012, *GQ* magazine [asked Florida's Senator Marco Rubio](#) [8], "How old do you think the Earth is?"

He answered "4.55 billion years" and no one ever talked about it again.

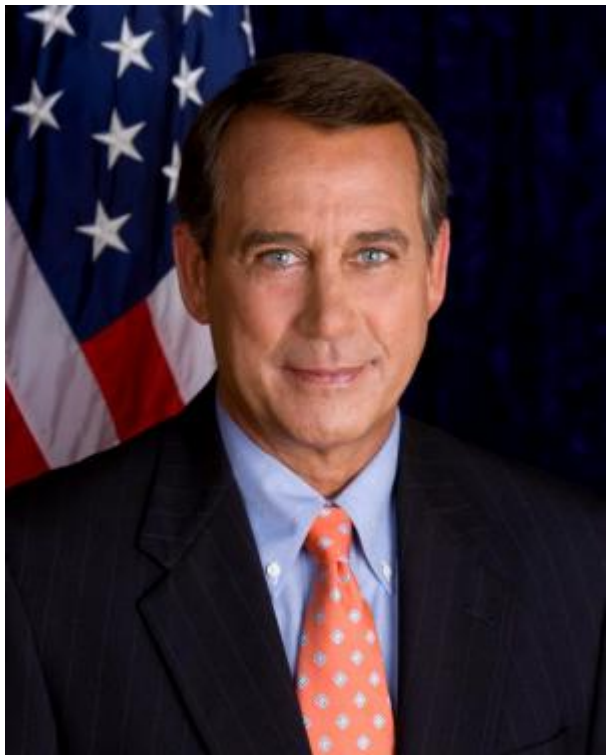
He [replied at length](#) [9], opening by saying, "I'm not a scientist, man," and then muddled science and theology without daring to specify a number at all.

Representative John Boehner, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, recently tried a similar dodge when asked "Are there steps you would support to take action against climate change, and do you think that's a problem?" Rather than saying "Yes," and listing any of the wealth of bipartisan, popular ideas that exist to confront climate change and boost the economy, [Boehner answered](#) [10]:

Well, listen. I'm not qualified to debate the science over climate change. But I am astute enough to understand that every proposal that has come out of this administration to deal

with climate change involves hurting our economy and killing American jobs. That can't be the prescription for dealing with changes in our climate.

One hardly needs to be a scientist to know that climate change is happening. As [the recently-released National Climate Assessment](#) ^[11] makes clear, climate change



has already affected our communities, our farms, our hunting and fishing. You don't need to be a weatherman to know which way the wind blows, and you don't need to be a scientist to notice the same climate change that the plants and animals around us are already adjusting to.

Science isn't a secret society. People without a PhD can do great science, and some of the best evidence for climate change comes from citizen scientists [cataloging the birds at their feeders](#) ^[12] or [the day when plants near sprout new leaves](#). ^[13] When your car won't start or when you're [a two-year-old trying to understand a new toy](#) ^[14], you develop hypotheses and test them against the evidence. [Toddlers aren't scientists](#) ^[15], but they have curiosity, fascination, and ability to test claims against evidence, abilities they don't (or shouldn't) lose when they become adults.

That's why the "I'm not a scientist" dodge just doesn't cut it. All Boehner, Rubio, and [the other politicians who've tried this angle lately](#) ^[16] have been telling us is: "I'm incurious and unwilling to bend my beliefs in light of evidence." We should ask more of our leaders.

[+ read](#) ^[7]

Source URL: <https://ncse.com/blog/2014/05/i-m-not-scientist-man-how-not-to-dodge-question-0015631#comment-0>

Links

[1] <https://ncse.com/users/josh>

[2] <https://ncse.com/printpdf/15631>

[3] <https://ncse.com/blog-tags/anti-evolution>

[4] <https://ncse.com/blog-tags/attack-science-education>

- [5] <https://ncse.com/blog-tags/climate-change>
- [6] <https://ncse.com/blog-tags/climate-change-denial>
- [7] <https://ncse.com/blog/2014/05/i-m-not-scientist-man-how-not-to-dodge-question-0015631>
- [8] <http://www.gq.com/news-politics/politics/201212/marco-rubio-interview-gq-december-2012?printable=true>
- [9] <http://scienceblogs.com/tfk/2012/11/19/im-not-a-scientist-man-is-marco-rubios-science-denial-stupid/>
- [10] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/29/boehner-climate-change_n_5411154.html
- [11] <http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/>
- [12] <http://feederwatch.org/>
- [13] <http://budburst.org/>
- [14] <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/337/6102/1623.abstract>
- [15] <http://boundaryvision.com/2012/08/13/inspiration-from-bassist-victor-wooten-shows-me-a-new-way-to-deal-with-my-child-as-scientist-frustrations/>
- [16] <http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2014/05/29/3442810/john-boehner-climate-science/>