



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas

Full Committee Markup of H.R. 2528, H.R. 36, H.R. 3196, H.R. 3153

June 20, 2019

Thank you, Chairwoman Johnson, for holding this mark-up. Today we will consider four bipartisan bills.

The first is H.R. 2528, the “STEM Opportunities Act of 2019.” H.R. 2528 continues this Committee’s long bipartisan history of supporting and expanding STEM education for all.

The only way we’ll achieve our potential is by utilizing America’s most valuable resource: our people. That means developing a diverse STEM-capable workforce at every education level and from every background.

One of the key provisions of H.R. 2528 is a requirement for more comprehensive data collection and analysis on the students, researchers, and faculty receiving federal science grants. This data will help us identify and reduce the barriers that prevent underrepresented groups from entering and advancing in STEM. It will also help us measure the success of federal STEM programs.

The bill also includes a provision directing NSF to support computer science education through the existing Tribal Colleges and Universities program. Access to computer science resources and the development of computing skills is critical in today’s economy.

I was pleased to join Chairwoman Johnson in co-sponsoring this legislation. I want to thank her and her staff for working with us to refine the bill for reintroduction and incorporating our feedback and ideas.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Chairwoman and members of the Committee to advance more STEM education efforts this Congress to support, encourage and develop the next generation of STEM students.

Our second bill this morning is H.R. 36, the “Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act of 2019.” Chairwoman Johnson and I made this one of our highest priorities, introducing it on the first day of the 116th Congress. This bill has a foundation of more than a year of investigation, analysis, and recommendations to the Science Committee.

Engaging more women in STEM studies and careers is essential to American competitiveness. Women make up half of the workforce, but account for less than 25 percent of America's STEM workforce.

Unfortunately, too many women have been driven out of STEM careers due to a culture of harassment and abuse. H.R. 36 takes the first steps to addressing this problem. The bill supports the adoption of uniform guidance across the federal science agencies to reduce the prevalence of sexual harassment involving grant personnel. The bill also directs NSF to conduct further research into the causes and consequences of harassment, as well as interventions to mitigate the problem.

There is an established legal process in place within higher education and in the workplace for handling claims of sexual harassment. This bill does not alter that process. What this bill does do, is create a new uniform policy that universities and research institutions report to federal science agencies when an administrative action is taken that impacts the ability of a researcher to carry out a grant.

We want to ensure the safety of all grant personnel supported by taxpayer funding. I'll be offering an amendment later in the mark-up that we hope makes this requirement even more clear.

Again, thank you Chairwoman Johnson for working in a bipartisan and collaborative way to move this legislation forward.

Next we will consider H.R. 3196, the "Vera Rubin Survey Telescope Designation Act," sponsored by Chairwoman Johnson and Representative Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colón. This bill honors the contributions of the late Dr. Vera Rubin, an astronomer who made groundbreaking discoveries in the field of dark matter and was a pioneer and life-long advocate for women in astronomy.

The new LSST Telescope under construction in Chile, funded by the National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy, will photograph the entire sky every few nights. One of the goals of the project is to study the nature of dark matter and dark energy. Naming the observatory in her honor is a fitting tribute to her contributions to the field and I hope will inspire future generations of women in astronomy.

Finally, the Committee will consider H.R. 3153, the "Expanding Findings for Federal Opioid Research and Treatment Act." The legislation identifies current gaps that exist in research on the prevention and treatment of opioid addiction and authorizes NSF to support research grants in these areas.

I thank Rep. Jennifer Wexton and Rep. Jim Baird for their bipartisan work on this bill. Opioid addiction affects too many in our communities, and I applaud this effort to support more basic research on the science of addiction.

Once again, thank you Chairwoman Johnson for holding today's mark-up, and I encourage the Members of this Committee to support these bills. I yield back the balance of my time.