COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement from Steve Knight (R-Calif.)

Full Committee Markup

Rep. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time to speak in support of an important initiative to strengthening our aerospace workforce.

H.R. 4253, the Women in Aerospace Education Act, directs the National Science Foundation, through the Robert Noyce Scholarship Program, and NASA to shape their fellowship and internship opportunities to encourage more women to get aerospace experience while they're training to be teachers.

Female aerospace professionals must be placed in the classroom in greater numbers.

A full fifth of U.S. aerospace engineers are of retirement age today. They are beginning to exit our workforce, which will create an enormous shortfall in our national security preparedness.

Meanwhile, women represent only about one-quarter of all STEM workers and represent about 15 percent of all aerospace engineers.

We need to improve our STEM education pipeline, from ensuring STEM classes are available to students at a young age to encouraging young Americans pursue STEM education all the way through to the completion of their degree.

But the gender gap that is so prevalent in this industry will persist until we make STEM and aerospace more inclusive of women and encourage women at a young age to pursue these fields.

Attitudes about career paths are formed at a young age.

The role models and leaders from which young women learn have an enormous impact on future decision-making.

I introduced the Women in Aerospace Education Act to make better use of some of the federal government's best teacher training programs to increase the number of women teachers who have seen, worked on and can relate the nation's leading aerospace programs to young female students.

Robert Noyce scholars, who get teacher certification assistance from the National Science Foundation, are already in small numbers getting experience in NASA Centers and the National Labs.

Once they become certified and go to teach in our K-12 system, they draw upon the work they did on major public initiatives in science and technology. Schools love having Noyce program teachers because their strong positive attitudes about STEM are cultivated in their students.

It will strengthen our STEM pipeline to enhance the connection between the Noyce scholarship program and our schools.

The second provision of this bill directs NASA to more actively promote its internship and fellowship opportunities to women or members of other historically underrepresented groups.

Together, the two provisions of this bill will help make a necessary and fundamental shift in our education system and aerospace workforce pipeline that will prove critical to our national security in the long run.

I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation. I'd like to thank Ms. Esty for her help on this bill and I yield the remainder of my time.

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