

Cosponsor the Gender Bias Elimination Act of 2007 (H.R. 3514)

November 8, 2007

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of more than 100,000 bipartisan members of the American Association of University Women, we urge you to **cosponsor the Gender Bias Elimination Act of 2007 (H.R. 3514)**, introduced by Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson. AAUW believes this legislation will help increase America's competitiveness by reducing gender barriers at college and universities that deter women from entering the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

This legislation makes many important strides by directly addressing concerns raised in the National Academies' report, "Beyond Bias and Barriers: Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering," which found that women face a lifetime of subtle biases that discourage them from careers in STEM fields. Under this legislation, agencies that fund scientific research (NIH, DOE, DOD, NSF, and NASA) will be required to conduct anti-gender bias workshops, enforce existing federal anti-discrimination laws (including Title IX), publish demographic and funding data for grant applications, extend grant support for researchers on leave for caregiving, and submit to Congress an evaluation of the program's impact.

AAUW supports efforts to increase representation of women in STEM fields. The shortage of American scientists threatens our nation's ability to compete and innovate in the coming years, especially as the outsourcing of jobs to, and importing of scientists from, other nations continues to grow. "Beyond Bias and Barriers" attests that attrition rates for women moving towards careers in academic science are greater than those for men at nearly every critical juncture, from early expression of interest in science and engineering to representation among tenure-track faculty applicants.¹ Furthermore, after entering the workforce, women scientists and engineers earn less and advance more slowly than men in both academia and the private sector. This can deter all but the most persistent women from pursuing these paths.

As noted in the Commission on Professionals in Science and Technology's publication, "Professional Women and Minorities," women now make up 25 percent of the labor force in science, engineering and technology fields (although that proportion varies widely, with fewer women in occupations that require a high level of math skills, such as engineering).² This means that a significant pool of untapped talent remains. If women and members of other traditionally underrepresented groups joined the STEM workforce in proportion to their representation in the overall labor force, the shortage of STEM professionals would disappear.³ This bill will help us move closer to that goal.

AAUW urges you to **cosponsor the Gender Bias Elimination Act of 2007 (H.R. 3514)**. To become a cosponsor, contact Joye Purser in Rep. Johnson's office (joye.purser2@mail.house.gov or 202/225-8885). If you have any questions, please contact me at 202/785-7720, or Tracy Sherman, government relations manager, at 202/785-7730. Votes associated with these issues may be included in the AAUW Congressional Voting Record for the 110th Congress.

Sincerely,



Lisa M. Maatz
Director of Public Policy and Government Relations

¹ National Academies of Science. *Beyond Bias and Barriers: Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering*. 2006, National Academies Press. Washington, D.C., 2006.

² Commission on Professionals in Science and Technology. *CPST (2006) Professional Women and Minorities: A Total Human Resources Data Compendium*. 16th ed. Washington, D.C.

³ Congressional Commission on the Advancement of Women and Minorities in Science, Engineering and Technology Development [CAWMSET], *Land of Plenty: Diversity as America's Competitive Edge in Science, Engineering, and Technology*, (September 2000).