

**OPENING STATEMENT OF  
THE HONORABLE VERNON J. EHLERS  
RANKING MEMBER  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND SCIENCE EDUCATION  
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering Act of 2008*

May 8, 2008

10:00am

2318 Rayburn House Office Building

Today we are examining legislation introduced by my colleague, Congresswoman Johnson from Texas, which addresses the biases and barriers women face in science and engineering faculty departments. I thank Representative Johnson for preparing this thoughtful legislation and appreciate her willingness to delve into the details and receive testimony from our witnesses today.

In October this Subcommittee held a hearing on the challenges faced by female faculty in science and engineering. Our witnesses were a dynamic group who spoke about the institutional changes needed and highlighted some of the programs the federal government currently supports in this area. We learned that effective institutional change must be systemic, and that sometimes bias hides behind even the simplest language used in recommendation letters.

Today we are going to talk about specific actions the Congress can take to address these biases. I hope that we are able to take what we learn from our witnesses today and incorporate some of their ideas into the final legislation. All of us want to ensure that equitable educational opportunities for women pursuing faculty positions are the norm and not the anomaly at U.S. colleges and universities. Important to this effort is making certain that we have a good understanding of the current situation so that we can be sure that federal efforts achieve the intended impact.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today.