



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON  
**SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**

Floor Statement

**Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

*H.R. 3196, the “Vera Rubin Survey Telescope Designation Act”*  
June 11, 2019

Madam Speaker, today I am joined by my Science Committee colleague, Representative González Colón, in introducing the *Vera Rubin Survey Telescope Designation Act*.

Dr. Vera Cooper Rubin was a renowned astronomer and a staunch advocate for women in science. She was also a trailblazer. Born in 1928, Dr. Rubin’s interest in astronomy was ignited early. As a young girl, she would rather stay up and watch the stars through her bedroom window than go to sleep.

After graduating from Vassar College in 1948 as the only woman astronomer in her class, Dr. Rubin hoped to pursue her doctoral studies at Princeton. However, the Princeton astrophysics graduate program did not admit women at the time and declined to send her a course catalog.

Dr. Rubin persisted and earned her master’s degree at Cornell and her Ph.D. at Georgetown University before joining the Carnegie Institution's Department of Terrestrial Magnetism.

As her career progressed, Dr. Rubin continued to face barriers because of her gender. For instance, after becoming the first woman to be officially permitted to observe at the prestigious Palomar Observatory in 1965, she discovered that the building had no women’s restroom. Undeterred, Dr. Rubin created her own women’s restroom by pasting a skirt cutout over the stick figure of a man on the observatory bathroom.

While Dr. Rubin was breaking down barriers, she was also revolutionizing our understanding of the universe. In 1970, Dr. Rubin and her collaborator Dr. Kent Ford published some of the best evidence of the existence of dark matter. This groundbreaking work changed the conventional view of the universe from one dominated by light-emitting matter to one dominated by dark matter.

Dr. Rubin went on to become the second woman astronomer elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1981. She received the National Medal of Science from President Clinton in 1993, and she received many other honors and awards throughout her career.

Motivated by her own battle to garner respect as a woman in a male-dominated field, Dr. Rubin worked tirelessly to encourage girls interested in astronomy to pursue their dreams. She advocated for more women members of the National Academy of Sciences and for more women on review panels and academic search committees. She also advocated for more opportunities for girls in science. In her address to the University of California, Berkeley class of 1996, Dr. Rubin

said “science is competitive, aggressive, demanding. It is also imaginative, inspiring, uplifting. You can do it, too,” urging the students to “devise your own paths”.

Dr. Rubin has a well-deserved place in history. This bill will honor her legacy by designating the *Large Synoptic Survey Telescope (LSST)*, jointly funded by the National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy and set to begin operations in 2023, as the *Vera Rubin Survey Telescope*. The LSST was designed, in part, to probe the nature of dark matter. As a tribute to the woman whose pioneering work made this pursuit possible, this bill would ensure that it bears her name.

I urge my colleagues to join us and help us move this legislation forward into law.