House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Stop the Assault of Female STEM Employees in FAA Offices

The America COMPETES Act (P.L. 110-69) became law on August 9, 2007. The act responds to concerns that the United States may not be able to compete economically with other nations in the future due to insufficient investment today in science and technology research and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and workforce development.

According to Rebecca Blank, the Acting Secretary at the United States Department of Commerce, “STEM skills are important for innovation. For America to become more competitive in today’s global economy, we need workers with skill sets that help to propel our nation forward. Increasing the number of workers trained in STEM fields will help strengthen some of the most innovative and fastest-growing sectors of our economy. Increasing the number of women who enter and stay in STEM professions is an obvious way to deepen this pool of important labor in our economy.”

Blank also states, “About 40 percent of men with STEM college degrees work in STEM jobs, whereas only 26 percent of women with STEM degrees work in STEM jobs.” Yet nobody ever addresses WHY people, especially women, leave STEM jobs.

While Dr. Lisa Schaefer was working as an engineering subcontractor in FAA offices, she was continually groped by an FAA employee. One day he masturbated in front of her. The next day she was fired. Poor treatment and low office morale was not atypical of her experience throughout her career. “I refuse to return to another job like that. I’m not going to crawl back to an abusive relationship,” says Schaefer.

Stirred by the Dominique Strauss-Kahn incident, on June 2, 2011 the hotel industry held speak-outs on sexual harassment and assault on the job in eight cities. The events were organized by a hotel union. However, due to workplace norms and the lack of women in companies and agencies that do technical work, women are discouraged from discussing harassment at work, and more likely socially and professionally punished for doing so.

Sign the petition to urge the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform to investigate the treatment of female employees and contractors in STEM jobs at the FAA and other government agencies. Our economy depends on it.

Sincerely,

Lisa Schaefer, Ph.D.