AMENDMENT TO RULES COMMITTEE PRINT 117-31

OFFERED BY MISS GONZÁLEZ-COLON OF PUERTO RICO

Page 407, after line 25, insert the following:

SEC. 10310. RECOGNITION OF THE ARECIBO OBSERVATORY.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) The Department of Defense began developing the Arecibo Observatory located in Barrio Esperanza, Arecibo, Puerto Rico, during the 1950s, and its characteristic instrument, a large radio telescope of 305 meters in diameter was completed in 1963.

(2) The facility was later owned by the National Science Foundation, and supported by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and various university partners.

(3) The Arecibo Observatory’s 305-meter fixed spherical radio telescope, was the world’s largest single-dish radio telescope until the Five-Hundred-Meter Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope located in Lizhou, China, began observing in 2016.
(4) The 305-meter radio telescope made unparalleled contributions to the fields of radio astronomy, planetary, and atmospheric sciences, and played a role in inspiring thousands of students in Puerto Rico, the Nation, and the world to pursue careers in STEM fields through the Arecibo Observatory Education and Public Outreach Programs.

(5) The radio telescope significantly advanced the field of radio astronomy, including the first indirect detection of gravitational waves, the first detection of extrasolar planets, innumerable contributions to the field of time domain astronomy and the study of the interstellar medium, and played a key role in the search for extraterrestrial intelligence.

(6) The Arecibo Observatory had the best planetary radar system in the world, used by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for near-Earth object detection and was an essential part of the agency’s planetary defense program.

(7) The planetary radar at the Arecibo Observatory has contributed fundamentally and significantly to the knowledge of the solar system.

(8) The Arecibo Observatory’s Incoherent Scatter Radar and supporting facilities have provided fundamental understanding of the ionosphere and
upper atmosphere, and the interface between the atmosphere and space that protects the planet from solar wind, meteors, and other potential threats.

(9) December 1, 2021, marks the 1-year anniversary of the uncontrolled collapse sustained by the radio telescope after a series of cable failures in tower 4.

(b) Sense of Congress.—It is the sense of Congress—

(1) acknowledges the loss of the Arecibo Observatory’s radio telescope due to its collapse and its implications for the loss of a unique world-class multidisciplinary science facility which conducted research in the areas of space and atmospheric sciences, radar astronomy and planetary sciences, astronomy, and astrophysics;

(2) acknowledges that the uncontrolled collapse of the 305-meter radio telescope represents a loss of astronomical observation capabilities, scientific research and development, planetary defense capabilities, and applied science capabilities for the United States;

(3) recognizes the rich scientific, educational, and economic benefits that the Arecibo Telescope
has made to the people of Puerto Rico, the Nation, and the world;

(4) recognizes the work and contributions made by the thousands of dedicated staff who have supported the Arecibo Observatory for close to 6 decades;

(5) commends the National Science Foundation for convening a virtual workshop in June 2021, to explore ideas for future scientific and educational activities at the Arecibo Observatory; and

(6) encourages the National Science Foundation, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and other agencies to explore opportunities for strengthening and expanding the role of the Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico through education, outreach, and diversity programs, and future research capabilities and technology at the site.