

## Women in Space?

On the 17th and 18th of July 1962, Representative Victor Anfuso (R) of New York convened public hearings before a special Subcommittee of the House Committee on Science and Astronautics. Significantly, the hearings investigated sex discrimination two full years before the 1964 Civil Rights Act made that illegal, making these hearings a marker of how ideas about women's rights permeated political discourse even before they were enshrined in law. Cobb and Hart testified about the benefits of Lovelace's private project. Jackie Cochran talked about her concerns that setting up a special program to train a woman astronaut could hurt the space program. **NASA representatives George Low and Astronauts John Glenn and Scott Carpenter testified that the women could not qualify as astronaut candidates.** NASA required all astronauts to be graduates of military jet test piloting programs and have engineering degrees. In 1962, no women could meet these requirements. Although the Subcommittee was sympathetic to the women's arguments, no action resulted.

**Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman in space in 1963.** In response, Clare Booth Luce published an article in Life magazine criticizing NASA and American decision makers. The U.S. civil space agency did not select any female astronaut candidates until the 1978 class of Space Shuttle astronauts. Astronaut Sally Ride became the first American woman in space in 1983 on STS-7, and Eileen Collins was the first woman to pilot the Space Shuttle during STS-63 in 1995. Collins also became the first woman to command a Space Shuttle mission during STS-93 in 1999. In 2005, she commanded NASA's return to flight mission, STS-114.

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