



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Subcommittee on Environment Hearing:
Ocean Exploration: Diving to New Depths and Discoveries
Wednesday, June 5, 2019

Thank you Chair Fletcher for holding this hearing, and I would also like to welcome our witnesses today.

I am glad to see our Committee so engaged in World Oceans Month and Capitol Hill Ocean Week from our film screening of *Chasing Coral* yesterday, to today's hearing, to our Ocean Exploration Expo tomorrow morning. We are also moving four bipartisan ocean acidification bills, which passed out of this Committee last month, on the House Floor this morning. The oceans are such a vital part of our national economy and livelihoods, with forty percent of the U.S. population residing in coastal counties that it is only fitting that we celebrate them.

The oceans make up over seventy percent of the surface of our planet, but over eighty percent of the world's oceans remained unmapped. It is commonly said that we know more about the surface of the moon than we do about the sea floor. Ocean exploration is more than just finding ship wrecks and identifying new marine species. It has the potential to answer questions about the origins of life on Earth and beyond. We have barely scratched the surface when it comes to marine discoveries.

I have always considered the Science, Space, and Technology Committee to be the Committee of the future. We have seen our federal investments in research and development lead to great advances in science and technology that have helped the United States to lead in many fields. This Committee should be committed to continuing to promote and enable American excellence in science, technology, and innovation. Ocean exploration is a field that has untold opportunity. But, despite the emergence of new cutting-edge and cost-effective ocean exploration technologies, we are ceding ground to other countries. Congress must be engaged in the next phase of ocean exploration so we can regain American leadership in this field.

In order to be global leaders, we must first understand the state and importance of ocean exploration, which is why today's hearing is so important. The witness panel brings together diverse perspectives of organizations that are at the leading edge of ocean exploration. It is a field that is built upon a foundation of partnerships between public, private, academic, and non-profit sectors. We need to ensure that we are fully leveraging these partnerships to maximize the

resources and tools available to us. I am looking forward to our witnesses providing feedback on how these partnerships are working, and how we can address knowledge gaps so that we can continue to make advances in this important.