



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics Hearing:
A Review of the Decadal Strategy for Planetary Science and Astrobiology 2023-2032
May 26, 2022

Good morning.

Thank you, Chairman Beyer, for holding this hearing, and welcome to our distinguished witnesses. We are fortunate to have both co-chairs of the decadal survey with us today. I know we are all eager to hear about their vision for the future and what planetary scientists hope to learn in the next decade about the formation, evolution, and interactions of planetary bodies. I also look forward to hearing about the next steps and key questions in the search for life beyond our planet.

The National Academies' decadal surveys are widely respected and highly influential. Each survey is a monumental effort, with the input and involvement of hundreds of scientists. This decadal survey ensures that the Nation's investments in planetary science and astrobiology are guided by the highest priority and most compelling science questions.

I'm also glad to see that for the first time ever the survey addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion in the planetary science field. Improving access, diversity, and inclusion are critical to realizing the decadal survey's vision and to sustaining our leadership in scientific research.

NASA has made groundbreaking discoveries in planetary science in recent years. The first powered and controlled flight on another planetary surface and the ongoing return of a sample from the asteroid Bennu are just two examples. If these successes are any indication, I know that the new decadal will bring equally inspiring and important results.

To fully realize the decadal strategy, however, we need to ensure that NASA maintains a focus on project management best practices and cost controls. NASA has struggled to manage cost and schedule for its large planetary science missions. The implementation of this new decadal survey will suffer if project management challenges continue.

Finally, as we look ahead to the exciting planetary science that awaits us, it is important that we reflect on why this great nation pursues such ambitious, complex programs in the first place.

Sixty-one years ago, yesterday, President John F. Kennedy laid out to Congress and the nation his audacious goal to land a man on the Moon and return him safely to Earth by the end of the 1960s. As we did back then, so can we now push the boundaries of what's possible in science, technology, engineering, and math. Doing so will inspire generations to come and lead to new knowledge and terrestrial benefits.

I again want to welcome our expert witnesses, and I look forward to their testimony.

Thank you, and I yield back.