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

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Full Committee Markup of:
H.R. 5260, the "Promoting Research and Observations of Space Weather to Improve the Forecasting of Tomorrow Act (PROSWIFT Act)."

Thursday, January 9, 2020

Good morning and happy new year, I would like to welcome everyone to the first markup of the new year. Today we are marking up the bipartisan PROSWIFT Act.

I would like to thank Representatives Perlmutter and Brooks for introducing H.R. 5260, the PROSWIFT Act. Space weather is a priority for this Committee, and I am pleased that we are taking a strong step forward in supporting research, observations, and actions to improve space weather forecasting and prediction.

As this Committee has extensively explored in recent years, space weather is the result of complex interactions between the sun, the solar wind, Earth's magnetic field, and Earth's atmosphere. Space weather phenomena, such as solar flares, can send potentially harmful particles and radiation towards the Earth and our orbiting satellites. Such phenomena can damage critical infrastructure such as satellite navigation systems, communications, and our electric grid, upon which we are increasingly dependent. Space weather phenomena could also impact our astronauts living and working in space.

Fundamental scientific questions about the Sun, the solar environment, and the Sun-Earth interactions remain unanswered. This limits our current ability to forecast space weather phenomena the way we can forecast terrestrial weather. When our Environment and Space and Aeronautics subcommittees held a joint hearing on space weather this past October, we heard that many gaps remain in the observational and modeling capabilities that support space weather research and operations.

The legislation before us today directs federal agencies to continue supporting critical observing capabilities on the ground and in space, and looks toward assessing and addressing those gaps. The bill codifies clear roles and responsibilities of federal agencies in understanding, predicting, and forecasting space weather. It enhances collaboration not only within the government, but with and among non-governmental partners in academia, industry, and the space weather end user and international communities.

Addressing our Nation's space weather needs and capabilities has been a bipartisan, bicameral Congressional priority for many years.

I want to particularly thank Mr. Perlmutter, who has introduced versions of this legislation in previous Congresses, and his staff for their persistence and dedication to this important issue. It may have been a long road to get here, but I do think that the legislation before us today is stronger because of the effort Mr. Perlmutter, our colleagues across the aisle, and the broader space weather community have put into it.

I look forward to considering this bipartisan bill today, and quickly moving it to the Floor for consideration by the House.