



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics Hearing:
*Enabling Mission Success from the Ground Up: Addressing NASA's Urgent
Infrastructure Needs*
July 29, 2021

Good morning.

I want to thank Chairman Beyer for holding this hearing today on the very timely topic of NASA's urgent infrastructure needs.

This Subcommittee held a hearing back in 2013 on NASA's aging infrastructure. We heard then about the risks to NASA's ability to successfully and safely achieve its ambitious missions with infrastructure that largely dated back to the Apollo era and was more than 40 years old. Now, that infrastructure is more than 50 years old and many of the concerns from 2013 still ring true today. For example, what was \$2.2 billion deferred maintenance backlog in 2013 has grown to more than \$2.6 billion, so NASA is falling behind, not catching up.

NASA's infrastructure needs span the spectrum. They include the mundane—but critical, and often forgotten—utility and access systems across nine Centers and other research and test facilities. They also include the specialized and unique R&D facilities that no other entity has, including wind tunnels for subsonic to hypersonic aircraft, gigantic clean rooms and vacuum chambers for highly sensitive interplanetary spacecraft, one of the most powerful supercomputers on the planet, neutral buoyancy pools, and countless others.

Managing this vast infrastructure is made more challenging by climate change, with some of NASA's critical facilities located in coastal, low-lying regions vulnerable to sea level rise and the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather. In my home state of Texas, Houston's Johnson Space Center saw significant flooding in 2017 from Hurricane Harvey.

It's clear that NASA's infrastructure challenges need attention now if NASA is to continue to lead and succeed in achieving its inspiring and ambitious missions. That's why I am working hard to have Congress address NASA infrastructure as part of a larger investment in Federal R&D infrastructure. While the path forward in Congress may not yet be totally clear, my commitment to addressing our R&D infrastructure needs is steadfast. Science, research, and innovation are our future. Without the necessary core capabilities, such as facilities and infrastructure, we run the risk of constraining that future. That's not the vision I want for NASA.

As I close, I want to thank our witness, Mr. Robert Gibbs, for appearing before us today, and I look forward to his testimony.

Thank you, and I yield back.