



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

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## Opening Statement

**Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Hearing:

*What Do Scientists Hope to Learn with NASA's Mars Perseverance Rover?*

April 29, 2021

Good morning. Thank you, Chairman Beyer, for holding this hearing and giving us the opportunity to hear about the exciting science to be gained from NASA's newest rover on Mars.

I would also like welcome our witnesses and thank you for testifying. I expect that you are all working very hard supporting the early surface operations of the rover. Some of you may even be operating on "Martian time" to carry out your tasks, and I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to share your expertise with us today.

I have often repeated my belief that NASA is a crown jewel of the Nation's research and development enterprise. That is clearly evident in the Mars Exploration Program's deliberate, strategic approach to studying Mars, with new missions successively building on past successes and knowledge gained over time.

Those past missions made significant discoveries. Scientists have learned that liquid water probably flowed in many places on the surface of Mars, and that many of the conditions required to support life as we know it likely existed along with liquid water, at least in some places.

The Mars 2020 Perseverance mission, which addresses the consensus top priority of the National Academies' planetary science decadal survey for a large flagship mission, is poised to continue that record of achievement, and I am looking forward to exciting new scientific advances coming from that mission.

Perseverance's science mission will take the important leap from the question of "was it habitable?" to "was it inhabited?" as it investigates Mars and collects samples that will eventually be returned to Earth for detailed study.

I look forward to hearing more from our witnesses about the fundamental science they hope to conduct with Perseverance in geology, astrobiology, atmospheric science, volcanology, and mineralogy in addition to the applied science investigations that will provide critical measurements in support of eventual human astronaut-scientists on the surface of Mars.

Let me close by recognizing Perseverance as a testament to the incredible achievements that our scientific and engineering workforce can accomplish, even under the most trying of

circumstances. In addition, I am proud of the tremendous public engagement I have witnessed with the NASA Mars program and the Perseverance mission. It proves once again the important role NASA's missions play in inspiring children and learners of all ages.

Thank you, and I yield back.