

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Space
*"An Overview of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Budget for Fiscal Year 2019"*
March 7, 2018

Good morning and welcome, Mr. Lightfoot. I would like to begin my remarks by expressing my appreciation for your distinguished service to this nation. As a NASA employee for almost 30 years, and Acting Administrator for the past 13 months, you have personified what I consider to be NASA's greatest strength—its people. The men and women who work at NASA truly are some of America's "best and brightest", and they make the almost impossible look easy—solving challenging problems in aeronautics, science, human spaceflight, and technology while keeping a complex organization running smoothly and fostering an environment that annually makes it one of the Federal government's best places to work.

We in Congress need to do our part to help you do your job, by supplying you with the resources you need in a timely manner. Unfortunately, too often we have failed to meet that basic responsibility, as evidenced by our continuing failure to provide you with your FY 2018 appropriations more than five months into that fiscal year. That is an unacceptable failure of governance that, as you know all too well, Mr. Lightfoot, has a serious impact on NASA's ability to carry out the important tasks the nation has given it.

Unfortunately, I see a similar failure of governance in the President's FY 2019 budget request for NASA. Although accompanied by optimistic rhetoric about assuring America's greatness in space, I'm afraid the reality behind that NASA budget request provides far less grounds for optimism. One only need look at the funding projections to realize that fundamentally this is a budget that has to resort to cannibalizing other NASA important programs to provide the semblance of an Exploration initiative.

Let me be clear. I consider Exploration to be a core mission of NASA, but not the core mission of the agency. As codified in the original 1958 Space Act, NASA has been and should continue to be a multi-mission agency with worthy initiatives in aeronautics, science, technology, and human spaceflight and exploration. NASA's Exploration program challenges us and inspires us and I support it, but I also support NASA's other core missions—missions that advance knowledge and benefit our citizens back here on Earth.

I support Exploration, but I want it to be sustainable. Unfortunately, the President's budget request fails to build a sustainable Exploration program. Why do I say that? Well, when NASA has to completely eliminate its Office of Education, cancel WFIRST—the highest priority mission of the National Academies' Astronomy and Astrophysics Decadal Survey, eliminate important Earth Science missions and instruments, and cut funding for the Aeronautics programs critical to our future competitiveness in aviation, just to give Exploration a small increase in FY 2019 over what it was getting in FY 2017, and then follows that with a lower and flat budget

runout for NASA [i.e., losing purchasing power every year] over the four years that follow, and proposes Exploration funding for the next four years that is lower than that proposed for FY 19, the warning lights are flashing. I could go on to cite other concerns with the President's NASA request, but I think you get the point.

Mr. Chairman, the issues confronting Congress as we review the FY 2019 budget request for NASA are serious and complex. I regret that we are holding this hearing at the subcommittee level instead of letting the full membership of the Committee hear from the Acting Administrator and ask him questions. As you know, NASA's budget is by far the largest of any of the agencies under our jurisdiction and worthy of scrutiny by all our Committee Members. That said, I hope that before we move to reauthorize NASA, this Committee will take the time to hear from all those who will be affected by this budget request. This request raises many issues, including but not limited to: the future of the International Space Station, whether Congress will continue to respect the Decadal Survey process, how best to advance Aeronautics research, and whether the Administration's exploration goals are achievable under its assumed budgets. Let us take the time to thoroughly examine these issues before we legislate, lest we look back in regret at ill-informed decisions made in haste.

With that, I yield back.