OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Space
"In-Space Propulsion: Strategic Choices and Options"
June 29, 2017

Good morning. And welcome to our witnesses. I look forward to your testimony.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss in-space propulsion with a wide range of government, academic, and industry experts. In-space propulsion will be a critical enabler of our future missions, especially those involving human exploration beyond Earth orbit. And it is important that the Subcommittee assess the state of research and development related to in-space propulsion technologies, which NASA, the National Academies, and the NASA Advisory Council all consider to be a priority. Not only is this technology important for NASA and our space program, but it would also have benefits for the commercial sector, which already uses electric propulsion for maintaining commercial satellite positioning.

Mr. Chairman, I am looking forward to hearing from our witnesses about the range and types of in-space propulsion technologies being studied and the progress of the research and development into each. When we consider progress, we also need to understand whether sufficient resources are being invested to make sure the technologies will be ready when NASA needs them. It is important to note that the budget for NASA's Space Technology Mission Directorate, which includes work on in-space propulsion, has been relatively flat. Can we achieve the milestones for the needed technology development on a flat budget?

Mr. Chairman, our investments in research and development of enabling technologies such as in-space propulsion are our "seed corn" for achieving our goals for space exploration. It is our job to ensure that what we make the needed investments.

Thank you, and I yield back.