

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

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
“James Webb Space Telescope: Program Breach and its Implications”
July 25, 2018

Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing on the “*James Webb Space Telescope: Program Breach and its Implications*,” and welcome to our witnesses, Administrator Bridenstine and Mr. Young. We appreciate your commitment to this high-priority science mission.

As a powerful observatory that will be 100 times more sensitive than the Hubble Space Telescope, the James Webb Space Telescope will be a gateway to unlocking the origins of the universe. Further, like Hubble, JWST will be an inspiration for our next generation of scientists, engineers, and citizens, and a symbol of America’s leadership in space science and exploration.

I appreciate the tireless commitment and dedication of NASA and its industry, international, and academic partners for their work on JWST. The hardware for the mission is now complete, and the observatory is undergoing integration and testing.

Getting to this point has not been easy. A 2010 review of the project identified significant cost and schedule growth. While the subsequent rebaseline plan helped keep the program on track for many years, today, we will discuss another series of setbacks to JWST.

I want to commend NASA for establishing the JWST Independent Review Board—the IRB—and I want to recognize the IRB Members for contributing their time and expertise, and Mr. Young for his leadership in chairing this effort. The IRB’s message is clear. Mission success for JWST needs to be the priority and finding potential embedded problems and minimizing the impact of human errors must be the focus going forward.

That said, the IRB was also clear on the fact that both NASA and the prime contractor for the mission, Northrop Grumman, have contributed to the 29-month schedule delay and \$1 billion cost increase to the project. In particular, the IRB found complex and confusing management reporting on the project, and inconsistent, uncoordinated communications on JWST within NASA and with external stakeholders, including Congress.

This is not good news, especially since some of these problems were identified in the 2010 review. I hope that today’s hearing will inform us of how NASA plans to ensure that these and the other IRB findings and recommendations are successfully implemented and how lasting processes are being put in place to prevent JWST’s problems from occurring on other NASA projects.

I am also concerned about potential “collateral” damage. I am eager to hear from Administrator Bridenstine on how NASA plans to ensure the health and balance of the astrophysics program, including small missions, research and analysis, and the next high-priority decadal survey mission, WFIRST, given the additional resources that will be needed to complete JWST.

As I've said on many occasions before, inspiring and challenging projects such as JWST are an investment in our future. The IRB found that "*JWST is an observatory with incredible capability and awesome scientific potential.*" And while it is up to this Committee to carry out the oversight of the taxpayer's significant investment in the project, we must not lose sight of the importance of bringing JWST to a successful outcome.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.