

Opening Statement

Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Space
“Commercial Space”

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding today’s hearing on “Commercial Space”, and welcome to our witnesses. Subcommittee Ranking Member Donna Edwards will join us shortly. She has asked me to take her place until then. Mr. Chairman, the Ranking Member also asked that her opening statement be included for the record.

As many of the committee members have stated on several occasions, we see a strong link between the space program and the inspiration it provides to our younger generation through various STEM activities. Commercial space is an important component of that inspiration and a key source of jobs and innovation.

The commercial satellite industry has experienced strong and steady growth over several years. I hope to hear today about what factors have contributed to such growth and how other commercial space ventures might learn from their success.

The audacious proposal from Mr. Tito and the entrepreneurial spirit overflowing at Mr. Witt’s Mojave Spaceport demonstrate that America’s yearning for deep space exploration and thirst for innovation are alive and well. But maintaining such enthusiasm requires a well-oiled partnership between the federal government, states, private industry, and academia.

Thankfully, there are many indications to show that this partnership is alive and well. Just yesterday, the first high school-developed cubesat was launched along with other payloads aboard the Air Force’s ORS-3 mission on a Minotaur 1 rocket from NASA’s Wallops facility. The Thomas Jefferson High School’s cubesat, known as TJ3SAT is a joint project between the High School and industry partners to design and build a CubeSat to increase interest in aerospace technology.

And a few weeks ago, I was pleased to see the Oregon Space Grant Consortium, which promotes STEM education through cooperative and interdisciplinary programs while recruiting and training NASA’s next diverse workforce, announce its 2013-14 Scholarship Recipients. The Consortium, part of the National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program, is a state-wide network of universities, colleges, museums, educators, researchers, students, and science professionals. Each of the scholarship recipients has expressed an interest in seeking a future in the aerospace, science, or education community and has attained the highest level of academic achievement.

Our partnerships among government, industry, states, and academia need to match their goals, dedication, and high achievement with challenging and engaging work.

So today I hope to hear our witnesses discuss their views on the state of the U.S. space workforce; how important STEM activities are to cultivating the skills that commercial space companies need; and what it will take to build the type of workforce that will eventually lead our U.S. commercial space activities into the next century. Let's keep their inspiration alive by finding greater opportunities for partnership.