

OPENING STATEMENT
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House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Space
“Private Sector Lunar Exploration”
September 7, 2017

Good morning, and welcome to our witnesses. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing on "Private Sector Lunar Exploration". While not a substitute for our governmental space programs, there are many innovative ideas for potential non-governmental roles in space emerging. Private sector innovation can capture the spirit of opportunity and engage and inspire the development of scientific and technical talent. It has the capacity to support commercial interests as well as governmental space activities, where appropriate.

This morning, we will hear about one example of potential commercial space activities--private sector lunar exploration. To date only government entities have explored the Moon, but the private sector is getting interested in the Moon too. It's no surprise that the Moon and its vicinity are of interest to a growing number of private sector entities and other nations. The Moon provides a potential testing ground for human exploration systems, operations, and activities. It harbors resources that could potentially be used to support lunar surface operations or exploration beyond the Moon, and some would argue that it even offers a destination for potential space tourists.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about their plans for private sector lunar activities, NASA's current role in those efforts, and about both the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead for the private sector in carrying out their plans. In addition, while not the focus of this hearing, it is important to note that the Moon has long been a body of scientific study, through U.S.-led and international lunar science missions, including from samples collected and returned on the Apollo missions. To that end Mr. Chairman, as we discuss private sector plans for lunar exploration, it is important that we understand the potential impacts of such activities on scientific priorities related to the Moon.

Before I close, I want to extend my thoughts and prayers to those in Houston and the surrounding areas that were affected by Hurricane Harvey, including the NASA employees, contractors, and partners of the Johnson Space Center. Their steadfast commitment to ensuring the safety of the ISS crew and continuation of James Webb's testing during Harvey's devastating rains exemplifies the professionalism and commitment they give our country's space program every day, even during times of extreme duress.

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