

OPENING STATEMENT
RANKING MEMBER EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON [D-TX]
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

“NASA Infrastructure: Enabling Discovery and Ensuring Capability”

September 20, 2013

Good morning. I would like to join my colleagues in welcoming our witnesses to today’s hearing.

When we think of NASA, we think of astronauts at work on the International Space Station, the Apollo program and today’s Orion and Space Launch System exploration vehicles. We think of cutting edge aeronautics research; robotic spacecraft landing on Mars, heading to the far reaches of the solar system and beyond, and imaging distant galaxies; as well as of spacecraft circling the Earth to provide us with unforgettably imagery and critical data needed to better understand our home planet and its climate. When we think of NASA, we *don’t* often think of wind tunnels, environmental test chambers, research labs, and office buildings. However, NASA’s impressive accomplishments would not be possible without NASA’s infrastructure and NASA’s dedicated workforce.

That is why today’s hearing is so important. We must ensure that NASA has the facilities and equipment that it needs to remain preeminent in space exploration, science, and aeronautics in the coming decades, and this hearing will help provide Members with the information we will need as we make decisions on NASA’s funding and priorities. In that regard, I hope that today’s hearing will be followed in the future by a hearing to look at what can be done to ensure that NASA’s employees will remain productive and at the forefront of their fields too, especially at a time when the federal workforce is facing severe challenges on a number of fronts.

Mr. Chairman, as we debate the fiscal challenges we face as a nation, it is important that we not let our examination of NASA’s infrastructure turn into simply an accounting exercise, one focused on cost savings and budgets cuts. By that I don’t mean to minimize the importance of seeking efficiencies and appropriate cost savings in NASA’s infrastructure investments whenever possible. Rather, what I am saying is that we need to focus first on what we are trying to accomplish with the nation’s investments in NASA—what are the outcomes we are seeking. Only then, can we intelligently assess what NASA will need in the way of infrastructure now and in the future. I believe that the NASA Authorization bill that Rep. Edwards and I introduced earlier this year provides clear direction and compelling goals for the agency, and I want to continue to work with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to come to a bipartisan consensus on NASA this year. However, I think it should be clear to all of us that NASA will be unable to achieve those goals if we fail to invest in safe, efficient, and productive infrastructure for the agency.