

OPENING STATEMENT

RANKING MEMBER EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON [D-TX]

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Good afternoon. I want to join Chairman Hall in welcoming our witnesses. I look forward to hearing from each of you today.

As Chairman Hall has stated, we are here to review the status of the James Webb Space Telescope, which has been the subject of much attention over the last year and half, as NASA has wrestled with cost growth and schedule delays on this project.

NASA has now developed a plan for getting the project back on track, and Congress has provided the agency with the funding that it has requested for JWST in fiscal year 2012. I look forward to hearing about the replan from our witnesses, as well as about any challenges and risks that still lie ahead.

In that regard, Mr. Chairman, I believe that this Committee is going to need regular updates on this project from NASA so that we can have confidence that its milestones are being met and so that we can have early warning of any problems that may develop. I want to work with you and the agency to ensure that we can get those status reports on a regular basis.

It is very important that NASA ensure that this project proceeds without further turmoil. As we will hear today, the telescope project's cost growth will have a negative impact on all of NASA's science activities—not just those in its astrophysics division. In dealing with the cuts that will be required, I think it is important that NASA allocate the cuts to its science program in a balanced manner that doesn't unduly target any single area, such as NASA's planetary science program. I look forward to hearing more about NASA's offset proposals at today's hearing.

In closing, as we take a look at the status of the James Webb Space Telescope and the issues the project needs to address, I hope that we don't lose sight of *why* the United States is undertaking this complex mission in the first place. The National Academies has rated it as a top priority for the nation's future astrophysics program, and the scientists here today will be able to tell us about the pathbreaking scientific research it is being designed to carry out.

But there is something at stake beyond the exciting scientific breakthroughs it promises—namely, like the Hubble space telescope before it, it will have the ability to inspire coming generations to dream and to want to undertake careers in science and technology. It's clear that for many of our young scientists- and engineers-to-be, a starry night or a picture of a galaxy obtained from a telescope like Hubble—and perhaps someday from JWST—is the spark that will start them on their way. In the midst of our scrutiny of the issues surrounding JWST, I hope that we don't forget that simple truth.

Thanks again to our witnesses for agreeing to testify here today, and with that I yield back the balance of my time.

