

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Space
“*Commercial Space*”

November 20, 2013

Good morning. I would like to welcome each of our witnesses to today’s hearing.

The topic of today’s hearing is an important one. About ten years ago, this Committee held a hearing entitled “*Commercial Human Spaceflight*”. Mr. Tito, who is on one of today’s panels, testified at that hearing. A lot has happened over the course of those ten years. The International Space Station was completed and continues to show great promise as an orbital laboratory. NASA is building the next deep space exploration system of the future. With the Space Shuttle retired, cargo resupply of the ISS is being turned over to two commercial providers, albeit a success made possible with substantial NASA financial investment and technical transfer. Today, constellations of commercial satellites circle the Earth, performing a multitude of critical functions. NASA and FAA are working together in anticipation of future manned commercial orbital flights. And both entrepreneurs and established companies are actively exploring a range of commercial space opportunities.

So it is fitting that we begin a comprehensive examination of what is needed to continue to grow commercial space. And I view today’s hearing as exactly that, hopefully just the beginning of a series of hearings that will thoughtfully examine all facets of commercial space prior to considering any legislation that will affect commercial space for years to come. Ten years ago, Mr. Tito expressed concern about the regulations that might be imposed on the nascent commercial space industry. He was clear to say that he was not looking to escape the regulations, but rather wanted clarity on which government agency, and which set of regulations, would oversee the then-new industry.

His questions are still valid today.

In addition, the fact that much of what we think of as commercial space in reality involves such a significant governmental role, and the fact that the lines between public and private may be becoming blurred for some space activities, requires a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities envisioned for these future commercial space endeavors. And, the fact that we are staring at yet another expiration of the risk sharing regime established in the Commercial Space Launch Act Amendments should not and must not detract us from the greater goal of examining this indemnification issue comprehensively. In the meantime, I am pleased to join Chairman Smith, Space Subcommittee Ranking Member Edwards, and Space Subcommittee Chair Palazzo in providing a clean, one-year extension of these provisions, while the Subcommittee has an opportunity to consider whether any changes are needed.

I look forward to this and future hearings to help us forge a clear direction.