

**Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Hearing on the U.S. Antarctic Program  
November 15, 2012**

**Opening Statement  
By  
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson**

Thank you, Chairman Hall, for holding this hearing and welcome to our esteemed panel of witnesses. The United States presence in Antarctica is critically important both strategically and scientifically. With two expert reports on both the science and logistics of our Antarctic research program recently completed, and a new contractor in place, we are at an important juncture in the 53-year old US Antarctic Program.

So I am pleased that we are having this hearing now to begin to review the many challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. However our ability to address them will inevitably depend on what decisions we make about the larger federal budget in the coming months. I hope that we will also keep Antarctica on our agenda in the next Congress as the budget picture comes into better focus.

By all accounts, the National Science Foundation and its agency partners have done an extraordinary job in building and maintaining a productive, safe, and efficient U.S. research program across the Antarctic continent. They have done so while minimizing our environmental footprint in Antarctica, hopefully giving all of us back in the U.S. some lessons on how we can take easy steps to reduce our energy consumption and reduce waste.

Our efficient investment in infrastructure and operations enables cutting edge science across many fields supported by multiple federal agencies. Most of us probably didn't know that there is an active volcano in Antarctica being studied by NSF and USGS scientists, and that NASA conducts some research down there because the harsh Antarctic environment is a good preliminary testbed for the harsh conditions in space. Many of our scientists are also conducting research on land and at sea to help us better understand and predict global climate change, and NOAA is making critical atmospheric measurements at the South Pole.

But the more efficient and safer we are in our logistical support of those activities, the more opportunity we will have to expand and strengthen the science we do. So I commend Dr. Suresh and OSTP Director Dr. Holdren on their decision to request a two-tier review of the US Antarctic Program, first to look at the science priorities, then to carry out an A to Z review of the infrastructure and logistics.

This is the very definition of good government.

I look forward to hearing from Mr. Augustine and General McNabb about the Blue Ribbon Panel's recommendations, and any specific advice they have for us on how the Science

Committee can be helpful. I'd also like to hear from witnesses as to whether the scientific community has expressed any concerns with respect to the Blue Ribbon's Panel's recommendations, and how the agency might best work with the community to minimize the short-term disruption to the science.

Last, but of course not least, I look forward to hearing about the scientific priorities for the US Antarctic Program going forward and how and why we all benefit from the science being carried out so far away from our own shores.

On another note, with this possibly being our last full committee hearing of the year, I want to take this opportunity to thank my friend and colleague Ralph Hall for his leadership of this committee.

With that I yield back.