

OPENING STATEMENT  
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House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Space Subcommittee  
*“The Commercial Launch Industry:  
Small Satellite Opportunities and Challenges”*  
April 19, 2016

Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this morning’s hearing.

There is no denying that small satellites have started a quiet revolution. Their low cost and quick turnaround in development and construction make them attractive platforms.

Users from the Commercial Sector, the Federal Government, and Universities are showing us the way as they build more and more capable smallsats on a daily basis.

Last November, the Committee heard from Planet Labs on how it is developing, and operating its Dove smallsats as components of a constellation for performing whole Earth, every day imaging.

And although we have yet to hear from members of the Federal Government and academia, and I hope we do so soon, rest assured that both are doing amazing things.

Notably, NASA is seeking to determine ways by which small satellites, and Cubesats in particular, can play an increasingly larger role in exploration, technology demonstration, scientific research and educational investigations. Two months ago, NASA selected four contracts as part of its InVEST Cubesat program to test Earth science technology in Space.

And universities are assisting NASA. For example, the University of Colorado Boulder’s Miniature X-ray Solar Spectrometer was launched last December aboard the Orbital ATK cargo resupply mission to the ISS. CU-Boulder’s NASA-funded Cubesat will study solar flares and the powerful X-rays emitted by the sun and is currently awaiting deployment into space using the ejection capability of a commercial dispenser on the ISS.

And, the National Academies will soon be releasing the results of its study on “Achieving Science Goals with Cubesats.”

But as with many technological advancements, there are challenges to consider in the potential that smallsats offer.

Our U.S. commercial launch vehicles have been focusing on launching and deploying larger satellites, so understanding any gaps in the U.S. launch capacity for smallsats and how to

address them is something that I hope this morning's discussion can contribute. Because finding affordable, reliable, and responsive access to space for smallsats will be critical to realizing their potential.

In addition, there are questions that I hope the Subcommittee will discuss at future hearings, such as the potential implications of a large number of smallsats on an already worrisome orbital debris problem and considerations were we to provide Universities with greater opportunities to be secondary payloads on launches conducted and paid for by the government.

But for today, I hope this panel can shed additional light on possible solutions to providing smallsat users and operators with more launch options, particularly those that are affordable.

Because if this Nation is to maintain its global leadership in technology, we must facilitate the means by which our young are inspired to do great things. Small satellites, along with rocketry and robotics, provide the learning catalysts we so dearly seek and need.

We must capitalize on the opportunities made possible by smallsats and find ways to launch them affordably.

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