

OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

“Unmanned Aerial Systems Research and Development”
Full Committee Hearing

January 21, 2015

Good afternoon. I want to welcome our witnesses to today’s hearing.

As we will hear today, potential applications for Unmanned Aerial Systems are growing at an explosive rate, whether in agriculture, delivery services, environmental monitoring, and so forth. It is an exciting time for this emerging industry.

I want the UAS industry to grow, because it offers the promise of societal benefits, economic growth, and skilled jobs—and those are good things for our nation. However, this industry will only prosper if it is clear that UAS operations will be safe and not put at risk either the public on the ground or the airline passengers who will share the skies with some of those UAS vehicles.

This hearing offers us an opportunity to explore both the potential of UAS as well as the research that may be needed to ensure that safety will be maintained as these vehicles are integrated into the National Airspace System.

As you know, I serve on both this Committee and the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee. I anticipate that we will be working on reauthorizing FAA’s activities in both Committees. I hope that this hearing will start the process of identifying any R&D issues that may need to be addressed in that legislation.

In closing, it is clear to me that UAS is one of the most interesting new developments in aviation, and I am glad we are holding this hearing. However, there are many other exciting things going on in aeronautics R&D that have the potential to transform air travel in the future. I hope that this Committee will use future hearings to look at aeronautics R&D more broadly so that Members can be informed about what is possible and what Congress can do to help promote that R&D.

Again, I want to thank our witnesses for appearing before our Committee, and I look forward to your testimony.