

OPENING STATEMENT

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

Is NSF Properly Managing Its Rotating Staff?
Joint Subcommittee Hearing

June 25, 2015

Good morning. I want to thank the Oversight and Research & Technology Subcommittee Chairmen and Ranking Members for holding this hearing, and I also want to thank the witnesses for their testimony.

I want to echo the comments of Ranking Members Beyer and Lipinski regarding the value of the Rotator program at NSF, and also the need to strengthen policies when mistakes are made and potential management weaknesses are identified. In a series of recent reports, the Inspector General has uncovered some areas where the agency needs to implement additional controls. I encourage the agency to address the IG's recommendations expeditiously.

NSF's gold-standard merit-review system is not the subject of this morning's hearing. However, it is the subtext of the most recent report from the IG's office. So let me take this opportunity to reiterate my confidence in the strength and integrity of NSF's merit-review policies and processes. NSF funds 11,000 grants per year. In the case we are hearing about today, in which a problem did arise, the problem was quickly identified and addressed by agency staff. We should take that as good news.

Let me also reiterate my confidence in the dedication and integrity of NSF's staff, both the federal employees, and those scientists and engineers to come to the agency for a temporary appointment as rotators. NSF's exemplary staff make the agency and its merit-review system the envy of governments and scientists across the world.

Today's hearing raises several legitimate oversight issues. I hope that this Committee will use this hearing as an opportunity to learn from these two esteemed witnesses about what can be done better so that even rare incidents, such as the one NSF found and the IG has now reported upon, can be avoided in the future.

With that I yield back.