

OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Hearing of the Energy Subcommittee
"Fusion Energy: The World's Most Complex Energy Project"

July 11, 2014

Thank you Chairman Lummis for holding this hearing today, and I would also like to thank the witnesses for being here.

Nuclear fusion has the potential to provide the world with a clean, safe, and practically inexhaustible source of energy. Producing reliable electric power from fusion would undoubtedly serve as one of the biggest and most important scientific achievements in the history of humankind. This is why I am so supportive of a strong research program that can help us overcome the remaining scientific and engineering challenges for this potential to become a reality.

The ITER project is the next, and largest, step toward this goal. For more than fifty years, scientists at our top universities, national labs, and in the private sector - as part of a truly global research community - have been conducting experiments and performing research that has brought the teams to a point where they are confident it is now possible to actually build a full-scale test reactor that produces far more energy than it uses. However, it is highly unlikely that a research project of this size can be achieved by one institution, lab, company, or, in this fiscal environment, even by a single country. That is why the ITER project has brought together the best scientists and engineers from the world's largest and most advanced nations to carry out this experiment.

But managing the dynamics of multiple countries working together toward a common goal, especially one as complex as this, is rarely easy, and ITER has proved to be no exception. Recent reports have documented several issues with the international organization's management which must be addressed if this project is to succeed. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how these problems are being dealt with, and to further discussing ways we can ensure that ITER achieves its incredibly important goals.

Thank you, and with that I yield back the balance of my time.