

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Space
*“Human Spaceflight Ethics and Obligations:
Options for Monitoring, Diagnosing, and Treating Former Astronauts”*
June 15, 2016

Good afternoon, and welcome to our distinguished panel of witnesses. I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing on *“Human Spaceflight Ethics and Obligations: Options for Monitoring, Diagnosing, and Treating Former Astronauts”*.

Our NASA astronauts are American heroes. They are some of the most accomplished, highly trained, and courageous individuals who serve our nation in the pursuit of furthering our exploration of outer space.

Astronauts and our human space program also inspire the next generation, with many of our youngest Americans dreaming of one day following in their footsteps and exploring outer space. It is no surprise that our astronauts are held in such high regard.

They accept considerable risks in doing their jobs and serving our nation. And over the decades that we have been sending humans into outer space, more than a dozen NASA astronauts have paid the ultimate price as part of this service. That is why I’m pleased that we are examining the responsibility we have to care for our astronauts, even after they have left active status.

Increased risk of cancer, musculoskeletal conditions, and ocular disorders are just a few of the known health concerns related to human spaceflight. But there is still much that we are learning and need to learn about the potential effects of space on the human body and on human health. Congress has acted to ensure that others we have put in harm’s way, such as those who have served in the military, receive lifetime healthcare. It is time we do the same for NASA astronauts.

The practicalities of how we authorize the provision of such health care are important, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on key questions and issues that Congress needs to consider before we legislate in this area.

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