

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

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
“NASA: Past, Present, and Future”
February 16, 2017

Good morning. I want to welcome our distinguished panel of witnesses and thank you for your service to the nation. I would also like to welcome our recently appointed new Members to the Committee. This morning we will be discussing NASA, whose inspiring mission is nothing short of "reaching for the stars".

Mr. Chairman, dreaming big is what propels our Nation to achieve lasting accomplishments. We all want our children and our grandchildren to believe in dreaming big and yes, in reaching for the stars.

NASA provides tangible evidence that we can do just that. Over the past 6 decades NASA has sent humans to the lunar surface, robotically explored all the planets in the solar system, landed and operated rovers on Mars, monitored the Earth and its systems, studied the Sun, and "looked" deep into the Universe. NASA has led the multi-nation International Space Station partnership and has supported continuous human operations on the ISS for over 15 years. In addition, NASA has made significant progress in demonstrating the use of commercially contracted services for cargo resupply of the ISS. And NASA anticipates that ISS commercial crew transportation services will begin within the next few years.

NASA continues to follow the priorities of the National Academies decadal surveys for its science programs. For example, the James Webb Space Telescope, scheduled for launch in October 2018, will enable us to examine the first light after the Big Bang to the formation of galaxies, stars, and planets.

I also want to recognize NASA's Earth Science program, which has a long history of space-based observations in support of research to better understand our Earth systems and our changing climate. In addition, NASA carries out Aeronautics research, which has been vital to the growth and safety of America's aerospace industry.

Today, NASA is making steady progress on developing the Space Launch System, the Orion spacecraft, and the Exploration Ground Systems—the key systems that will enable us to once again send our astronauts beyond low-Earth orbit and, eventually, to Mars.

As important as these activities are to advancing our priorities in space and aeronautics, they are no less important to us here on Earth. Advances in human health research and medical diagnostic tools, materials, and advanced technologies developed through the space program have all helped improve our daily lives. However, we cannot take NASA's incredible achievements or the benefits they provide for granted. They will not continue without a sustained commitment of vision, resources, and support.

It is clear that the challenge ahead of us is to provide NASA with stability and sustainability so that it can carry out the challenging tasks that our nation has given it. We can get to Mars, but we need a plan to do so that is sustainable over multiple decades. We can answer the difficult question of whether there is life in the Universe by continuing to support the scientific investigation of our solar system and beyond. I have no doubt that working together, we can enable NASA to these things and more. However,

we must be careful not to undo NASA's progress by changing direction with each new Administration. Simply put, we must commit to staying the course.

Mr. Chairman, at a time when much of our national discourse revolves around what divides us, we can look to our space program as something that unites us.

Well, we have a lot to discuss this morning, and I look forward to our witnesses' testimony. I also look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, our colleagues on the Committee, and the new Administration to ensure that we give NASA and its partners the stability, sustainability, and resources needed to continue our leadership in science, aeronautics, human spaceflight and exploration.

Thank you and I yield back.