

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

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Full Committee Markup of
“H.R. 5049, NSF Major Research Facility Reform Act of 2016”
April 27, 2016

Thank you Chairman Smith for holding today’s markup of the NSF Major Research Facility Reform Act of 2016. I also want to thank Oversight Subcommittee Chairman Loudermilk for introducing this bill.

This bill deals with an important issue. The National Science Foundation manages a vast array of research projects across its portfolio. While most of these projects involve grants of less than one million dollars, some of their projects are of a much larger scale. We recently held a hearing to congratulate the scientists working on one such endeavor: the LIGO project that detected gravity waves. As the LIGO project demonstrated, these efforts involving major facilities have the potential to generate profound breakthroughs in science. However, these major facilities also cost a lot of money. Properly managing those large expenses is critical to ensuring the success of the major facilities projects, and ultimately, critical to the advancement of science.

Over the past weeks Chairman Smith’s staff and my own have tried to work on bill language that would be acceptable to all parties. I appreciate the Chair and his staff’s work in this regard. We have made a great deal of progress, and I think that with the addition of the manager’s amendment and my own amendment, I can support moving the bill forward in the legislative process.

However, I do still consider this legislation a work in progress. We have been receiving feedback from the National Science Foundation, the National Science Board, and external stakeholders over the past week, and we continue to receive feedback on an ongoing basis. It is important that we continue to thoughtfully consider the views of these interested parties as we move forward, and quite possibly make additional modifications to the bill language as is needed. At the end of the day, those interested parties are the ones that will actually build the telescopes and conduct the groundbreaking science, and as such, their views carry great weight with me. Moreover, it is very important that we don’t unintentionally increase the risk to the taxpayer for these large projects.

[I see our resident Committee scientist, Mr. Foster, also has an amendment. As a person who has had experience conducting the groundbreaking science I just spoke of, I also place great value on his views and I look forward to hearing about his amendment today.]

Once again, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your work and the work of your staff to reach consensus on this piece of legislation, and I yield back.