

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
115th Congress Organizational Meeting
February 7, 2017

Thank you Chairman Smith. And before I go further in my statement, I want to thank you for agreeing to move the Committee's organizational meeting to today so that we could attempt to finish filling out our Democratic roster.

I also want to welcome all the returning and new Members of the Committee on both sides of the aisle. On the Democratic side of the aisle, we have a new Member for the 115th Congress: Ms. Jacky Rosen from the third district of Nevada.

Ms. Rosen has a background in computer programming and software development, and I'm looking forward to her bringing that expertise to bear in the Science Committee.

We are working in extremely partisan and contentious times, and sometimes those differences spill over into this Committee. However, I do want to take a moment to reflect on why I believe serving on this Committee is so important. Nowhere else in Congress do Members get to peer into the promise of the future like we do on the Science Committee. On this Committee, we ponder the future of space exploration, the advancement of computers and artificial intelligence, and the nature of our universe itself.

We regularly interact with Nobel Prize winning scientists, engineers who are developing tomorrow's technologies, and even astronauts who have explored beyond our Earth.

As people who have sat on this Committee in the last Congress know, Chairman Smith and I have had our share of political differences. I think I'm safe in saying that the Chairman shares my enthusiasm for those qualities that make the Science Committee a special place in this institution. I suspect this will be a contentious Congress, but I hope that we can work together whenever possible to reinforce the best of those qualities over the next two years. Hearings and legislation that look to the future may not have an obvious political benefit to us. But they are profoundly important for our country.

And, I firmly believe that coming together to work on these forward-looking issues makes us all better Representatives to our constituents back home.

I want to briefly speak about our agenda items today. We are meeting to approve the Committee Rules and the Committee Authorization and Oversight Plan today. I appreciate that the Rules have not significantly changed from last Congress, and that the oversight plan is largely inoffensive. However, I feel I must take a moment to address the issue of subpoenas.

Last Congress, the Committee Rules were changed to allow the Chair of the Committee to unilaterally issue subpoenas.

During the 114th Congress, the Chairman issued more subpoenas than in the rest of my 25 years of service on this Committee combined. I don't think anyone can honestly suggest that this is an appropriate exercise of congressional power. For over two centuries, Congress didn't think it

necessary to vest this power solely in the hands of committee chairs, and no compelling rationale has been advanced to justify it. It is an undemocratic practice, and I think this committee, as well as the others that adopted this practice, should abandon it.

However, I can count, and as we have no chance to pass an amendment changing this portion of the rules, I'll not be offering one today.

I've made my objections known, both today and over the past two years, and people can be sure that I will continue to voice my objections to this practice whenever I think it is being abused.

With that, I once again say to all of my colleagues that I'm looking forward to working with you this Congress, and I yield back.