

## OPENING STATEMENT

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Space and Environment Subcommittee Joint Hearing on  
*“Exploring Commercial Opportunities to Maximize Earth Science  
Investments”*

November 17, 2015 @ 10:00 a.m.

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Good morning, and welcome to our distinguished panel of experts. I am pleased that we have an opportunity to discuss NASA’s Earth Science and Applications Program.

As I have said on numerous occasions, NASA is a critical engine of discovery, science, innovation and inspiration. Earth Science and applications research is a key agency responsibility.

A 2005 study by the National Academies stated that *“Decades of investments in research and the present Earth observing system have also improved health, enhanced national security, and spurred economic growth by supplying the business community with critical information”*.

NASA’s Earth Science and Applications Program provides a broad array of benefits and applications across the public and private sectors. For example, after the Deepwater Horizon spill in 2010, a NASA project allowed response teams to track the movement of the oil into coastal waterways. This was critical in assisting in monitoring the impact and recovery of affected areas along the Gulf of Mexico.

Our investment in Earth observations has also spawned successful international cooperation. The Global Precipitation Measurement (GPM) mission, a cooperative effort by NASA and the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency, is advancing our understanding of Earth's water and energy cycles, improving the forecasting of extreme events that cause natural disasters, and extending current capabilities of using satellite precipitation information to directly benefit society.

Maintaining and enhancing our Earth Science capabilities and investments in the years to come will require that we continuously look for new sources, be they international or from the private sector. Indeed, with the growing number of American companies launching and operating space-based remote sensing small satellites, this may be an opportune time to assess the private sector's ability to complement NASA's Earth observation systems.

I hope our distinguished panel will provide us with an objective assessment of both the opportunities and challenges associated with leveraging commercial offerings.

With that, I again want to thank our witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to your testimony. With that, I yield back.