

OPENING STATEMENT

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

Space Subcommittee Hearing
“Exploring Our Solar System: The ASTEROIDS Act as a Key Step”
September 10, 2014

Good morning. I want to join Chairman Palazzo and Ranking Member Edwards in welcoming our witnesses to this morning’s hearing.

Hearings such as today’s provide a clear reminder of the amazing advances that are possible when this nation makes a sustained commitment to investing in research and development. It is not an overstatement to say that the planetary science missions that will be discussed today would have been considered the stuff of science fiction not too many years ago.

As I speak, a spacecraft is circling the planet Saturn and imaging its moons, and a robotic rover is preparing to climb a mountain on Mars and even attempt to image a comet that will be visible in the Martian sky. A spacecraft is on its way to Pluto, and we are discovering and tracking asteroids that could potentially threaten the Earth.

We are living in a wonderful time of scientific exploration, and I look forward to hearing more about NASA’s planetary science program this morning. But we also need to hear about what problems need to be addressed to ensure that this record of achievement can continue.

With that, I again want to welcome our witnesses, and I look forward to hearing your testimony.