



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics Hearing:
*Keeping Our Sights on Mars: A Review of NASA's
Deep Space Exploration Programs and Lunar Proposal*
May 8, 2019

Good afternoon. I want to join the Chairwoman in welcoming our witnesses to today's hearing, and I look forward to your testimony.

I will be brief in my remarks. It is now more than six weeks since Vice President Pence announced that NASA was being directed by the President to undertake a crash program to land astronauts on the Moon within the next five years. Over that six week period, the President has been uncharacteristically silent, making no public statements or tweets in support of his lunar initiative. NASA, for its part, has provided no specifics on either the plan or the required budget for the proposed accelerated Moon program, saying it hopes to have something for Congress "soon".

I hope so. And I hope that when NASA delivers the plan and revised budget to Congress, it will also provide a compelling rationale for the proposed crash program that justifies the additional resources that will be required to meet the President's arbitrary deadline. Because as Chair of the Science Committee, I cannot look at NASA's proposal in isolation, nor can my colleagues on the appropriations committee.

I just came from a hearing on the National Science Foundation's FY 2020 budget, where we heard that the President's request would cut NSF's budget by a billion dollars. As you know, NSF is one of the nation's premier research agencies, funding research across a range of important scientific disciplines. That billion dollar cut will have serious negative impacts on major research areas if enacted. A week ago, we had a hearing on the NOAA budget request, and the news was similar: the President's request would cut NOAA's budget by a billion dollars. And three weeks before that, we heard that the President's request would cut the discretionary budget of the National Institute of Standards and Technology by more than 30 percent, or almost \$300 million. Finally, the Department of Energy's research programs would be cut by \$4.5 billion.

So if Congress is to increase NASA's budget simply to speed up a lunar landing relative to what was already planned, Congress will have to weigh the opportunity costs of doing so.

That said, I want to make it clear that I do not support the alternative of cannibalizing NASA's other important research activities just to speed up the human lunar exploration program. On Monday, Ranking Member Lucas and I visited NASA's Goddard Spaceflight Center and heard

about all the important space and Earth science research activities being undertaken there. We should be investing more in such inspiring and consequential research, rather than cutting it as is proposed in NASA's FY 2020 request.

As I close, I want to reiterate my support for a strong, forward-leaning human and robotic exploration program. I believe that human missions to the Moon and Mars, as well as robotic exploration, will continue to inspire as it did when Americans first walked on the Moon. But we need to get it right as we pursue such a program, and we need to strike the right balance across all our important national research priorities. Thus, I expect that this Committee will need to have NASA appear before us again once it provides us with the information it has promised us.

With that, I again want to welcome our witnesses, and I yield back.