



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement from Space Subcommittee Chairman Brian Babin (R-Texas)

The Great American Eclipse: To Totality and Beyond

Chairman Babin: I want to start by thanking our colleagues on the research and technology subcommittee for hosting this joint hearing. The eclipse was an amazing and exciting event, and I look forward to our discussion.

Something that struck me about this eclipse is the level of excitement it generated all across the country. In a time when the country seems locked in controversy and division, the eclipse was something that brought all of us together in awe and wonder.

NASA's web traffic during the eclipse skyrocketed; it peaked at a level seven times higher than its previous record. The traffic set new records for overall government web traffic, according to the GSA's Digital Analytics Program. The eclipse's online viewing audience compared with the audience for the Superbowl. Even Netflix lost about 10 percent of the day's viewership to the eclipse.

Schools across the country incorporated the eclipse into teaching programs. There is no telling how the eclipse sparked the imagination of schoolchildren, or which school experiments might have captured critical scientific data.

The eclipse was also one of those rare, wonderful events that was as exciting to the scientific community as it was the person on the street.

Beyond the dozens of citizen science experiments — which I hope we can hear about today — scientists in government and academia were able to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity. Researchers carried out numerous of experiments and studies in fields from astronomy, to meteorology, to animal behavior during the eclipse.

This combination of public excitement, scientific benefit and, even more importantly, inspiration to our youth brings to mind an interesting comparison. In a way, the 2017 solar eclipse was almost like a space mission brought to our nation's backyard.

Instead of looking outward to see something amazing, something amazing came to us. This makes the public response a cause for optimism. The eclipse proved that wonder and awe can still bring us together. It proved that the public, particularly our

children, can get involved in science and be excited by new discoveries. That in a time of distraction and controversy, the majesty of nature can still outperform us all.

I am excited about the upcoming 2024 eclipse. Which, in my opinion, could even be more impressive and awe-inspiring. Not least, because the path of totality for the eclipse travels right through my home state, the great State of Texas.

I thank you all for your testimony and I look forward to the discussion.

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