



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

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Statement of Space Subcommittee Chairman Brian Babin (R-Texas)
Planetary Flagship Missions: Mars Rover 2020 and Europa Clipper

Chairman Babin: NASA's planetary science flagships are the crown jewels of our robotic exploration of the solar system. *Viking, Voyager, Galileo, Cassini, Chandra, and Mars Science Laboratory* are programs that have inspired generations of Americans. One need only visit a local elementary school to see the wonder in our children's eyes as they learn about the great discoveries of these flagship missions. *Mars Rover 2020* and the *Europa Clipper* will be no less amazing.

Upholding such a legacy is not easy. From its original recommendation by the National Academies, through formulation and development, and ultimately launch and mission operations, there is much work to be done to ensure mission success, that the taxpayers' money is appropriately spent, and that the national interest is met.

Today's hearing serves an important oversight purpose. Our witnesses will provide important testimony on *Mars Rover 2020* and the *Europa Clipper*, from both a programmatic and science perspective. The hearing will also provide an opportunity for Committee members to learn about the science that these missions will conduct and how it will benefit our nation.

I have full faith that NASA and its hard working men and women will carry out its planetary science flagship missions successfully. That said, NASA is entering the most critical stage of the *Mars Rover 2020* development and is undertaking the development of the *Europa Clipper*, and possibly a *Europa Lander*, at the same time.

For *Mars Rover 2020*, the NASA Inspector General reported concerns regarding an overly optimistic schedule for *Mars Rover 2020* based largely on technology development challenges. I look forward to hearing from Dr. Green about these issues and how NASA is addressing them.

A fundamental oversight question that needs to be addressed is how developing and operating these flagship missions at the same time, including a possible lander, will affect the planetary science division and broader science mission directorate portfolio. NASA must remain vigilant to protect against potential cost growth or mission creep that could impact other activities.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017 funded and requires a *Europa* lander mission to complement the *Clipper*. The act directed NASA to launch the *Clipper* in 2022 and a lander in 2024.

The FY18 President's budget request does not include funding for a Europa lander. NASA says that because the Planetary Science division already supports two other large strategic missions – *Mars Rover 2020* and *Europa Clipper* – it cannot accommodate a Europa lander without significant impacts to other programs.

While a Europa lander is not included in the FY18 budget request from the Administration, it has become an established concept for the future. NASA's Europa Lander Science Definition Team conducted a study on the topic in 2016 to evaluate landing on Europa and assess the science value and engineering design of a future lander mission. More recently, NASA released a community announcement to ask scientists what instruments would benefit a Europa lander and NASA continues to work on lander design concepts

I strongly support NASA and its efforts with the Mars Rover 2020 and Europa Clipper. I also believe there is great value in exploring the possibility of a Europa lander. However, it is critical that as Congress and NASA moves forward, we do our due diligence to assure not only flagship mission success, but also the success of the entire Planetary Science portfolio. I'd like to highlight the importance of sufficient research and analysis funding so that scientists can actually study the data derived from these missions.

I thank the witnesses for being here today and look forward to their testimonies.

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