

## **OPENING STATEMENT**

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

Subcommittee on Research & Technology Hearing  
*“A Review of the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program”*

July 29, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for holding this important hearing on the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program, or NEHRP.

I also want to thank the Chairman of the full Committee, Mr. Smith, for agreeing to this hearing. Chairman Smith agreed to hold a hearing on NEHRP and work on a NEHRP reauthorization bill while we were discussing the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program. This hearing is a good first step in fulfilling that agreement. I want to thank the Chairman and Majority staff for working with my staff on putting together this hearing.

Through infrequent, earthquakes are unique among natural hazards in that they strike with little or no warning. In 1964, Alaska was hit with a great earthquake that measured 9.2 in magnitude. That was the second strongest earthquake in recorded history and resulted in significant damage from both the earthquake itself and the tsunamis that followed.

California has numerous active faults that have produced large earthquakes in the last few decades—from the 1971 San Fernando earthquake to the 1989 Loma Prieta and 1994 Northridge earthquakes.

In fact, NEHRP was established by Congress in response to the 1964 Alaska and 1971 San Fernando earthquakes. Since its creation, NEHRP has accomplished a great deal. It has improved our understanding of earthquake processes; improved our earthquake hazard and risk assessments; improved earthquake safety for new and existing buildings; and increased public awareness of earthquake risks and mitigation techniques.

But more work is still needed, including improving the earthquake resilience of communities nationwide and developing cost-effective measures to reduce earthquake impacts on individuals, the built environment, and society. To ensure that this work gets accomplished, we need to reauthorize NEHRP, which has not had Congressional authorization since 2009.

That is why I am a co-sponsor of H.R. 2132, the *Natural Hazards Risk Reduction Act of 2013*, which was introduced by Representative Wilson last May.

H.R. 2132 would reauthorize the NEHRP program as well as the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program and would make changes to the fire research program. This legislation is modeled after bipartisan legislation that passed the House by an overwhelming margin in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress.

I am pleased that the windstorm program was reauthorized in a separate bill, H.R. 1786, that was introduced by Representative Neugebauer. I supported that bill when it passed the House earlier this month. However, I do believe we need to take a multi-hazards approach to disaster mitigation.

Taking a multi-hazards approach could create opportunities for synergy among the various research and mitigation activities. Further, a multi-hazard approach could help achieve the goal of producing communities that are resilient to any and all disasters. I hope that as we work on a NEHRP reauthorization bill, we look for opportunities to create synergies and coordination across the hazards programs.

I want to thank the witnesses from both panels for being here today. It is very important to hear from you as we consider reauthorizing this important program. I look forward to your testimony.