



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Subcommittee on Space & Aeronautics
Subcommittee on Environment

Looking Back to Predict the Future: The Next Generation of Weather Satellites.

September 21, 2022

Good morning and thank you to Chairs Beyer and Sherrill for holding this important hearing on the future of NOAA's weather satellites.

The importance of NOAA's weather satellites is unquestionable. The ability of the National Weather Service to provide accurate and lifesaving forecasts often starts with data collected by these satellites. This past week, we have seen the devastating remnants of a typhoon pummeling Western Alaska. Despite record storm surge and hurricane force winds, the Weather Service was able to provide timely warnings that allowed Alaskans to evacuate with no injuries or fatalities reported thus far. And earlier this week, Hurricane Fiona caused Puerto Rico to lose power, and flooding due to catastrophic rainfall continues. As we evaluate the devastation caused by this storm on the five-year anniversary of Hurricane Maria, I am hopeful that timely warnings based in part on data from those critical satellites helped to minimize the loss of life in Puerto Rico as well.

These are just a few recent examples of why it is important not only for the public to know the value of these assets but also for Congress to understand how a program of this magnitude is being carried out to ensure its continued success. As these types of once in a lifetime storms become more commonplace due to climate change, it is vital that NOAA's future satellite programs not only maintain current capabilities, but further enhance them to deal with a rapidly changing climate and protect communities most at risk from climate impacts.

In years past, this Committee held oversight hearings to provide insight into weather satellite programs that faced delays and growing costs. This work led to a reconfiguration of NOAA's satellite programs, and further formalized the ongoing partnership between NOAA and NASA. This interagency partnership to develop, launch, and operate these satellites has led to significant overall improvement in program implementation. The current geostationary, or GOES-R series, and polar-orbiting, or JPSS satellites made significant advancements in image quality and detection capabilities from previous programs.

As NOAA and NASA embark on the next generation of weather satellites to follow GOES-R and JPSS, it is important to understand what metrics are being used to develop future programs. That is why the oversight work of the Office of Inspector General at the Department of Commerce is crucial. Having regular, independent, and thorough assessments of the ongoing satellite programs helps to ensure the most successful outcomes possible.

This Committee has done a great deal of work in showing the value of weather and climate data to Americans in their everyday lives. It is important to understand how lessons learned from previous and current satellite development programs can help inform future satellite architectures. I anticipate a robust and enlightening discussion with our witnesses this morning on what to expect in the coming years and decades.

Thank you and I yield back.