

**OPENING STATEMENT OF
RANKING MEMBER EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON (D-TX)
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE AND TECHNOLOGY**

Recent Developments in NASA's Commercial Crew Acquisition Strategy

**Friday, September 14, 2012
9:30 AM to 12:00 PM
2318 Rayburn House Office Building**

Good morning. I would like to join Chairman Hall in welcoming our witnesses to today's hearing. You both have served the nation well in a number of capacities over the years, and we appreciate your dedication.

I will try to be brief in my opening comments. It was a little less than a year ago that this Committee held its most recent hearing on NASA's commercial crew program. At that time, I raised a number of concerns and questions that I believe Congress needed to have addressed if we were to adequately pass judgment on NASA's plans and protect the interests of the taxpayer. A year later most of those questions and concerns remain.

I had hoped that in the intervening time, NASA would either converge on a realistic and executable plan within likely funding levels that could provide safe, affordable, and timely commercial crew transportation services to the International Space Station—or alternatively, determine that it couldn't do so with a high likelihood of success within the available funding and then look for other ways of meeting its crew transportation needs.

Unfortunately, NASA has done neither.

Instead of converging on an executable plan, NASA has shifted its acquisition approach multiple times and now is proposing to carry out two distinct acquisition approaches in parallel. It has persisted in basing its program on budgetary assumptions that appear to be unrealistic based on both the authorizations and appropriations provided to date and the fiscal outlook facing the agency. And it still does not appear to have achieved a consensus within the agency on whether the primary purpose of the program is to provide crew transport to the ISS as soon as possible or to attempt to create a new commercial crew industry that doesn't currently exist.

While I hope that I am wrong, those don't appear to be the characteristics of a program that is headed in a successful direction. And I see other symptoms of a program in trouble. First, despite repeated requests by this Committee and concerns voiced by the Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel, NASA still has not had an independent cost and schedule assessment conducted for the commercial crew program, so we still do not know what the ultimate cost to the American taxpayer is likely to be, or when these systems are likely to become operational.

Second, while a number of Members have supported the program because they do not like the idea of paying the Russians to transport our astronauts to the ISS, NASA has been unable to provide any evidence to indicate that the cost per seat to NASA will be any lower than the costs it incurs with the Russians. Instead, a number of the analyses done for NASA to date

indicate that NASA's cost per seat from commercial providers could be several times *higher* than the prices charged by the Russians.

Third, while one of NASA's stated goals for its commercial crew program is "*Achieving significant industry financial investment*", based on Committee staff calculations the recently awarded Space Act Agreements demonstrate that the companies selected are only willing to contribute an average of just 11% of the cost of developing the commercial crew systems—systems that the government will then also have to pay to use. I'm not sure I can explain to my constituents why they should consider that a fair arrangement.

Finally, although I think most Members believe the primary justification for the commercial crew program is to provide crew transportation to the ISS as soon as possible, NASA's own planning charts now show operational commercial crew transportation services to the ISS not starting until *2018*—not the 2015 or 2016 dates agency officials were originally predicting—and only two years from the currently scheduled end of the Space Station program. Even that 2018 date appears to be based on funding levels from here on out that are not likely to be achieved.

Well, I'm sorry that I can't give a more positive assessment today. I really am excited by the work that the companies have done to date, and I certainly wish them well. However, as I said at last year's hearing, I can't let my enthusiasm for entrepreneurship override my responsibility to take a clearheaded look at NASA's plans. I owe that to my constituents and to all of the American taxpayers.

I will just close by again thanking our witnesses, and I look forward to your testimony. With that, I yield back the balance of my time.