



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

For Immediate Release
September 28, 2017

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**Statement from Research and Technology Subcommittee
Chairwoman Barbara Comstock (R-Va.)**

The Great American Eclipse: To Totality and Beyond

Chairwoman Comstock: On August 21, the “Great American Eclipse” captured the imagination of a nation. For the first time in 99 years, a total solar eclipse could be seen coast-to-coast from Oregon to South Carolina.

Millions of Americans travelled to the 70-mile wide “path of totality” that stretched across 14 states. Millions more witnessed the partial eclipse from their home, school or office – using eclipse glasses, telescopes and even homemade cereal box viewers to watch the event. Hundreds of local museums, libraries and science centers hosted events that were packed.

NSF, NASA and their partners engaged in months of planning for the event.

The purpose of today’s hearing is to review what scientific knowledge was gained from studying the eclipse, how U.S. telescopes and other scientific instruments were used to capture the eclipse, and lessons learned from engaging kids and the public in STEM education and citizen science.

I also want to learn how can we harness the enthusiasm for major events like the eclipse into inspiring a whole generation of students to go into STEM fields. I am particularly happy to have two women on the witness panel today who are experts in their fields.

In order to fill the millions of open STEM jobs across the country, we must be able to harness the talent of our nation’s young women.

It is estimated that only 3% of these jobs will be filled by a woman. That is why I introduced the INSPIRE Women Act, which was signed into law earlier this year. The bill leverages NASA’s talent pool of current and retired astronauts, and early career female scientists, engineers, and innovators to inform and inspire young women to pursue their dreams in STEM subjects.

I want to take a moment to recognize three students and their families in the audience today who have participated in my Young Women Leadership Program.

Reagan Williams – a junior from South County High School. She watched the Solar Eclipse in Fairfax County at home with one of her friends, dad and two young sisters. Kendall Pade and her mom, Genemarie Pade. Kendall is from McLean, Virginia and an 8th grader that attends the National Cathedral School located in Washington DC. They originally didn't have any eclipse glasses, however their neighbor called around 1PM saying they had two extra glasses and were able to watch the solar eclipse on their front lawn in McLean.

Christine Vuong and her mom, Linh. She is a junior from Centreville High School. She watched the eclipse in Ocean City.

I hope they will be inspired by our witnesses today, and that we can harness the enthusiasm for the eclipse into inspiring a whole generation of students to go into STEM careers.

We'll be sharing the videos and pictures from the hearing today with our constituents back home too.

I thank all of our witnesses and look forward to your testimony.

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