



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

For Immediate Release
April 26, 2018

Media Contacts: Thea McDonald, Brandon VerVelde
(202) 225-6371

Statement by Chairman Brian Babin (R-Texas)
Surveying the Space Weather Landscape

Chairman Babin: Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to conduct this joint hearing, and I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses. Specifically, I am interested to hear their insights and observations from the recent Space Weather Workshop in Colorado.

Understanding and predicting space weather is critical to protecting American infrastructure and human safety both in space and on the ground. While government agencies have made steady advances in this area, we must now explore ways to expand our capabilities and begin leveraging the private sector.

As we begin preparations for space exploration outside the protection of Earth's magnetosphere, the Space Subcommittee is keenly aware that understanding and predicting space weather is more important than ever for the safety of our astronauts and the achievement of our exploration goals.

Perhaps even more tangible, are the effects of space weather here on Earth. While space weather can give us some of the most beautiful sights on Earth, the aurora borealis, or the northern lights, there are also many negative effects of space weather that often go unseen. Strong space weather events can knock out electrical grids, corrode pipelines and disrupt satellite communications.

Many, including the brave men and women serving our country, rely on critical information gathered by in-space infrastructure like GPS and remote sensing. These space-based assets are particularly vulnerable to the effects of space weather.

It is time to develop a plan to protect ourselves from these events. NASA's continued research and development of space weather satellites will provide more advanced American capabilities. That, combined with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) work in data analysis and space weather prediction, comprise a strong government effort. However, progress does not come without cost. Which is why we must look to the private industry moving forward.

The Deep Space Climate Observatory, also known as DSCOVR, is a good example for defining roles and responsibilities. DSCOVR - built by NASA - is NOAA's first operational satellite in deep space, orbiting a million miles from Earth in order to provide early warnings of potentially harmful space weather. This NOAA operational capability for space weather analysis and prediction was established through the technology transition of unique scientific

instruments researched and developed by NASA. I contend this model represents the way forward for interagency space weather activities.

As the private sector continues its move into low-Earth orbit, more and more companies will be relying on space weather predictions to protect their assets. Space weather is another area of great commercial opportunity in space, and, as we have in the past, we must continue to encourage and leverage these private endeavors for the benefit of all Americans.

The threats posed by space weather events can be mitigated through advanced research and prediction methods. I hope this hearing today will shed light on our current space weather projects and how we can continue achieving American excellence in such a critical area.

I thank our witnesses today for their testimony and look forward to this discussion.

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