



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

For Immediate Release  
April 26, 2017

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**Statement of Space Subcommittee Chairman Brian Babin (R-Texas)**  
*Advances in the Search for Life*

**Chairman Babin:** The science of astronomy, astrophysics and astrobiology expands mankind's understanding of the Universe. It seeks to answer fundamental questions as to the nature of our Universe, our place within it, and whether there is life beyond Earth.

NASA has a long history of space-based astrophysics and astronomical science. Since the 1960s, NASA has operated space-based observatories. Among the most famous of these are the Hubble Space Telescope, which has produced some of the clearest images of the Universe to date.

Looking to the future, the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), set to launch in 2018, will be the most powerful space-based observatory to date and will be used to search for planets outside our Solar System that could harbor life.

In my own district, at Johnson Space Center, NASA's historic "Chamber A" thermal vacuum testing chamber is being used for end-to-end optical testing of JWST in a simulated cryo-temperature and vacuum space environment. I'm proud to represent the hard working men and women at Johnson Space Center contributing to JWST, our nation's next great space-based observatory.

Johnson Space Center is also home to NASA's "Astromaterials and Curation Office." This office is responsible for the curation of extraterrestrial samples from NASA's past and future sample return missions. This is an exciting responsibility for Johnson Space Center and an important contribution in the search for life beyond Earth.

We live in exciting times. The *NASA Authorization Act of 2017* provides strong direction for NASA to continue to search for life and advance the science of astronomy, astrophysics and astrobiology. It is quite possible that with continued efforts, humanity will finally answer the question and know definitely whether life exists on other worlds.

I thank today's witnesses for joining us today and I look forward to hearing your testimony.

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