

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

Charter

TO: Members, Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
FROM: Majority Staff, Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
DATE: October 4th, 2017
SUBJECT: Space Subcommittee Hearing: “Powering Exploration: An Update on Radioisotope Production and Lessons Learned from Cassini”

On Wednesday, October 4th, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 2318 of the Rayburn House Office Building, the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Subcommittee on Space, will hold a hearing titled, “Powering Exploration: An Update on Radioisotope Production and Lessons Learned from Cassini.”

Hearing Purpose

To evaluate NASA and DOE’s efforts to reconstitute the production of Plutonium-238 (Pu-238), which is necessary for radioisotope thermoelectric generators (RTG) that provide electrical power for spacecraft that cannot use solar energy. Production ceased in the 1980s, and existing inventories were incorporated into planned missions. With the recent end of NASA’s Cassini mission to Saturn, which used Pu-238 to enable its scientific discoveries, the hearing will evaluate current efforts to reconstitute Pu-238 production, and the science it makes possible. The Science, Space, and Technology Committee requested the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to review NASA and DOE’s efforts to reconstitute domestic production of Pu-238. GAO will release the results of their review at the hearing.

Witnesses

- **Mr. David Schurr**, Deputy Director, Planetary Science Division, National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- **Ms. Tracey Bishop**, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Infrastructure Programs, Office of Nuclear Energy, Department of Energy
- **Dr. Ralph L. McNutt, Jr.**, Chief Scientist for Space Science in the Space Exploration Sector, The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory
- **Ms. Shelby Oakley**, Director, Acquisition and Sourcing Management, Government Accountability Office

Staff Contact

For questions related to the hearing, please contact Mr. Tom Hammond, Staff Director, Space Subcommittee, or Ms. Sara Ratliff, Policy Assistant, Space Subcommittee, at 202-225-6371.