

Congressional Hearing on Asteroid Threat

November 7 2007

UC Davis physics professor J. Anthony Tyson will testify before Congress on Thursday, Nov. 8, on near-Earth asteroids. Tyson will talk about the potential role of the proposed Large Synoptic Survey Telescope (LSST) in surveying the sky for objects that might eventually strike our planet. The hearing of the House Committee on Science and Technology will begin at 10 a.m. in room 2318 of the Rayburn Office Building.

Tyson is director of the LSST project. The LSST is a proposed ground-based, 8.4-meter telescope that will provide digital imaging of faint astronomical objects, covering the available sky every three nights. It will map the mysterious "dark matter" thought to make up much of the universe by looking for distortions of light from distant galaxies.

It will also open a window on objects that change or move on rapid timescales such as potentially hazardous near-Earth asteroids, exploding supernovae and comets. Construction cost for the telescope, which would be located on a mountaintop in northern Chile, is estimated at about \$389 million.

The hearing will examine the status of NASA's Near-Earth Object survey program, review the findings and recommendations of NASA's report to Congress, Near-Earth Object Survey and Deflection Analysis of Alternatives, and assess NASA's plans for complying with the requirements of Section 321 of the NASA Authorization Act of 2005.

Others scheduled to testify include Rep. Luis Fortuno, R-Puerto Rico,

Puerto Rico resident commissioner; James Green, director of the Planetary Science Division, NASA; Scott Pace, NASA associate administrator; Donald K. Yeomans, manager of the Near Earth Object Program Office, Jet Propulsion Laboratory; Professor Donald B. Campbell, Cornell University; and Russell L. Schweickart, chairman of the B612 Foundation.

Source: UC Davis

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