

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
U.S. Congressman Jerry Costello

NASA Human Spaceflight Past, Present, and Future: Where Do We Go From Here?

Thursday, September 22, 2011
10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
2318 Rayburn House Office Building

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding today's hearing to receive testimony on the past, present, and future of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA's) human spaceflight programs.

I would like to personally thank Commander Armstrong and Captain Cernan for their defining contributions to the U.S. space program, human spaceflight, and to this nation. The risks taken and rewards gained from Apollo stand as a testament to the power of human spaceflight to inspire our nation.

Sixteen months ago, this Committee held a similar hearing with Mr. Armstrong and Capt. Cernan. At that time Congresswoman Giffords, Chairwoman of the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee, voiced concern about the viability of the Administration's proposal and the need for budgets that matched the tasks to be undertaken. In her words, you can't do meaningful exploration "on the cheap." She emphasized the need to keep safety paramount while ensuring that the U.S. not cede its leadership in space and retain an inspiring vision for exploration. Much has changed since that hearing.

The 2010 Authorization Law directed NASA to develop a new government-owned Space Launch System (SLS) and Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle (MPCV) to explore space beyond low-earth orbit (LEO); provide back-up capability to deliver crew and cargo to the International Space Station (ISS); and preserve the critical skills of our aerospace workforce.

Just over a week ago, NASA announced its final decision for the design of the SLS, and I am pleased that the decision has been made so that we can move forward. Congress needs to examine how the program will be implemented, including the objectives and destinations for human exploration beyond low-Earth orbit.

The inspirational value of human space exploration cannot be underestimated. I am interested in hearing about the potential objectives and destinations for human space exploration that would best maximize the use of the MPCV and SLS while continuing to inspire our nation.

I welcome our panel of witnesses and look forward to your testimonies. Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.