

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

An Overview of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Budget for Fiscal Year 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding today's hearing on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 budget request.

Today, we are at an important juncture in our nation's space program, having successfully flown-out the Space Shuttle manifest, retired the Space Shuttle fleet, and completed assembly of the International Space Station.

There is much to be proud of with these accomplishments and I commend the hardworking men and women at NASA and in the contractor workforce on their unwavering commitment to safety and excellence in completing these critical milestones in our human spaceflight program.

And I'm pleased to see that NASA is making good on its commitment to funding its share of the Shuttle contractor workforce pension plan.

NASA has also had important accomplishments in science and aeronautics research that have advanced our knowledge and delivered benefits to our society.

At the same time, NASA faces significant challenges.

NASA's FY 2013 budget proposes \$17.7 billion for our nation's space and aeronautics program, maintaining NASA funding at an essentially flat level with respect to the FY 2012 enacted appropriation.

Recognizing the severity of our fiscal environment and the fact that many agencies are experiencing cuts, the administration's FY 2013 budget request for NASA signals continued support for the future of our nation's space and aeronautics program.

This budget proposal maintains several key congressional priorities, including continued development of the Space Launch System and Multipurpose Crew Vehicle, operating the International Space Station, and facilitating development of the next generation air transportation system.

However, the fact that NASA seeks to maintain such challenging and important priorities within a flat budget outlook requires that we take a close look at the alignment among NASA's requested resources, plans, and capabilities.

First, NASA's request to facilitate the development of commercial crew transportation systems to the ISS is well in excess of that appropriated for the commercial crew program in FY 2012 and the level authorized for FY 2013. In addition, the approach for working with private industry to acquire those systems has been in flux. I am interested in hearing from the Administrator how NASA will ensure the safety of those systems for carrying NASA astronauts in light of its inability to mandate adherence to its safety requirements, as well as what factors in his view are necessary to meet the current commercial crew timeline.

Second, the planetary science budget takes a serious cut and impacts not only NASA's overall Mars exploration efforts, but effectively ends U.S. involvement for the 2016 and 2018 European Space

Agency-led missions to Mars. I have particular concerns about NASA's decision to cease exploration for new planetary missions that have yielded results and new discoveries. I would like to hear from the Administrator on the agency's rationale for proposing such disproportionate cuts to planetary science, what NASA's plans are for future Mars programs, and if he is concerned that this shift will make the U.S. look like an unreliable partner.

Third, now that Congress has passed an FAA Authorization bill that the President has signed into law, I am interested in hearing from the Administrator how NASA will ensure that NASA's contributions to the next generation air transportation system—NextGen—remain on track so that the American people can benefit from increased safety, efficiency and effectiveness in air transportation for generations to come.

Finally, it goes without saying that NASA has inspired countless individuals to pursue education and careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. I would like to hear from the Administrator on the implications of the proposed \$36 million reduction to NASA's education program on NASA's ability to leverage its inspiring mission activities in STEM education activities.

I welcome Administrator Bolden and look forward to his testimony. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.