

STATEMENT OF  
THE HONORABLE JERRY F. COSTELLO  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SPACE AND AERONAUTICS  
*“The Future of NASA: Perspectives on Strategic Vision for America’s Space Program”*  
DECEMBER 12, 2012

The NASA Authorization Act of 2010 states that *“The National Aeronautics and Space Administration is and should remain a multi-mission agency with a balanced and robust set of core missions in science, aeronautics, and human space flight and exploration.”*

Last week, a National Research Council (NRC) panel found that NASA’s ability to sustain that balanced portfolio is in jeopardy. This should not be a surprise. As this Committee has reiterated on multiple occasions, for the past several years, NASA has been underfunded.

There is a mismatch between what we expect NASA to do and how much we fund it.

This is unfortunate, because NASA is a critical part of the Nation’s research and development enterprise, as well as a worldwide symbol of American technological prowess and the global leader in space and aeronautics. That status is no longer assured.

More troubling is the NRC panel’s conclusion that *“The approach to and pace of a number of NASA’s programs, projects, and activities will not be sustainable if the NASA budget remains flat, as currently projected.”*

I understand that we are in tough economic times. But I hope that this hearing will illustrate how NASA provides a sizeable return on the taxpayer’s investment through its balanced portfolio. So I am eager to hear from our witnesses on how we can ensure that NASA maintains its leadership in space science, aeronautics research, and human space exploration.

In my final days as Ranking Member of the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee, let me say that over the years, I have seen NASA do great things supported by a dedicated workforce and able contractors.

If we in Congress do our part, a flight test of the Orion Capsule in 2014, initial test of the Space Launch System in 2017, launch of the James Webb Telescope in 2018, and completion of critical R&D in support of NextGen by 2018--among other important tasks--are all possible and NASA will continue reaching for the stars and helping to improve life here on Earth.