

Congressman John Culberson
Testimony before the Science Space and Technology Committee's Space Subcommittee
Space Leadership Preservation Act
10:00AM February 27, 2013

Thank you Chairman Smith, Chairman Palazzo, and Ranking Member Edwards for scheduling this hearing to review the *Space Leadership Preservation Act* (H.R. 823). I am especially thankful to your staff for working with me on this legislation as we seek to make NASA more professional and less political.

It is unacceptable to allow our space program to atrophy because the vision, or lack thereof, changes with political whims from year to year. I have provided each of you with a chart that reveals we have spent over \$20 billion dollars in the last 20 years, more than an entire year of NASA's budget, on programs that have been started and then cancelled. That is unconscionable. Switching missions and vehicles every few years is a deadly cycle for our space program.

As Commander Neil Armstrong said during his last testimony to this Committee, "NASA itself, driven with conflicting forces and the dashed hopes of canceled programs, must find ways of restoring hope and confidence to a confused and disconsolate workforce. The reality that there is no requirement for a NASA spacecraft commander for the foreseeable future is obvious and painful to all who have, justifiably, taken great pride in NASA's wondrous space flight achievements of the past half century."

This legislation will make NASA more stable, accountable and responsive to the needs of the scientific community by creating a board of experts empowered to propose long term goals for space exploration. The board will submit a quadrennial review of all space programs and a vision for space exploration that ensures that we set reasonable goals and diligently work toward them. The board will not supplant the constitutional authority of Congress or the Administration, but it will add critical insight to the true needs of the agency. The board will prepare NASA's budget, and then administrator will concurrently submit the budget to Congress and the Administration. By doing so, we get a more transparent view of what funding NASA requires to stay on schedule.

This legislation also sets the term for administrator at 6 years. Having a set term for an administrator allows that individual to lead more boldly and lessens the likelihood that an administrator would be pressured politically.

Finally, this legislation extends the long range contracting statute to other spacecraft, a practice that currently applies to expendable launch vehicles, hopefully removing these large investments from the cycle of pillar to post funding. Allowing NASA to build spacecraft the way the Navy builds nuclear reactors would be a game changer. Naval Reactors have become the gold standard for procurement in terms of schedule and budget. Having the ability to plan for multiple years would allow NASA to save money and attain long term goals.

As you know, the United States currently depends upon the Russians to access the International Space Station (ISS) for our astronauts to the tune of \$63M per seat. While commercial providers

are now beginning to service the ISS with cargo, crew access is still years away. We are without access to space while other nations are investing heavily in their space programs with the goal to overtake us. China has already declared their intention to establish a base on the moon and is scheduled to do a “soft landing” on the moon later this year. They will likely have a manned mission by the end of the decade.

We cannot continue down this path. The *Space Leadership Preservation Act* will restore the NASA we knew when America landed the first man on the moon. Visionary NASA scientists, engineers, and astronauts will be able to inspire future generations by their continuing mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life, and to boldly go where no one has gone before.

I am honored to be here with you today and appreciate your time and attention to this legislation.

Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.