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Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Space Hearing
NASA Authorization Act of 2013
2318 Rayburn House Office Building

Opening Statement

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Good morning. I'd like to join the Chairman in welcoming our witnesses to this morning's hearing. You both have provided valuable counsel to our Committee in the past, and I am certain that you will do so again today.

As the Chairman has indicated, we are here today to begin our review of the Majority's Discussion Draft of the NASA Authorization Act of 2013. Those who know me know that I consider NASA to be a critical part of the nation's innovation infrastructure, a driver of technological and scientific progress, a positive symbol of the United States throughout the world, and most importantly, a source of inspiration for successive generations of our young people. I strongly believe that any NASA Authorization bill that comes out of this Committee should reflect those realities.

Unfortunately, the draft bill that we are starting to examine today doesn't do that. It doesn't contain funding commensurate with the tasks NASA has been asked to undertake—in fact, it gives NASA *additional* unfunded mandates while maintaining deep sequestration cuts over the life of the bill. It contains policy direction that I fear will do long term damage to the agency. And, I regret to say that if enacted, it would not help NASA meet the challenges facing the agency. In short, it is a missed opportunity to position NASA for excellence, and it's a bill that if enacted would lead to the erosion of the capabilities that have made NASA such a positive force for progress.

Why do I say that? Well, I have already mentioned the deep and sustained cuts this bill makes to NASA's overall budget—at a time when we should be investing *more* in NASA, not putting it on a path to mediocrity. It also cuts NASA's Earth Science budget by *one-third*, which I find baffling. Certainly the Committee has held no hearings on NASA's Earth Science program in this *or* the 112th Congress, so it's hard to see any justification for those cuts. It makes equally damaging cuts and changes to NASA's Space Technology program—again without explanation.

And despite on the one hand putting NASA's budget on a path of declining purchasing power for the foreseeable future, it on the other hand directs NASA to establish major new *programs*—not just goals—for sustained human presences on *both* the Moon and Mars.

Moreover, in addition to imposing other unfunded and underfunded mandates on numerous NASA programs, it also sets an arbitrary deadline by when NASA will have had to carry out a successful commercial crew flight to the International Space Station—a deadline that I fear will lead to the kind of schedule pressure the *Columbia* Accident Investigation Board warned against a decade ago after the tragic loss of the Space Shuttle *Columbia*.

Mr. Chairman, there are other areas of the draft legislation that I fundamentally disagree with, but I think you have a sense of my overall view. This is not a bill ready for markup. This is a flawed draft, starting from its funding assumptions, and I cannot support it in its present form. I can also predict that if passed by our Committee, this bill would be DOA in the Senate.

Rather than moving directly to an unproductive markup, I hope that the Majority will take a step back and at a minimum hold additional legislative hearings so we can hear from the affected parties what the impacts of the proposed cuts and changes to Earth Science and Space Technology will be. We also need to hear from the congressionally established Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel on its views of this legislation, because I know that no Member on this Committee will want to do anything that would jeopardize safety.

In closing, NASA is an investment in our future. The women and men who work at NASA are some of our best and brightest. We owe it to them and to our children and grandchildren to take the time to produce a NASA Authorization Act worthy of this Committee.