

Opening Statement
Subcommittee on Space Ranking Member
Donna F. Edwards (D-MD)
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
“Full Committee Markup Of 2013 NASA Authorization”

July 18, 2013

Mr. Chairman, NASA is critical to this Nation and its economic strength. Unfortunately, in the past few years, we have not funded NASA adequately in a way that reflects that unique role.

As an authorizing committee, it is our obligation to provide NASA with a challenging vision, one which its employees, contractors, and supporting university researchers can seize on and translate into inspiring missions, programs, and projects. But as I've said, we have a role in setting a vision, but also must realize that we are not scientists and engineers. They are.

But having now tasked NASA with challenging missions, it is our responsibility to provide the resources that allows the agency to succeed. As expressed during last week's subcommittee markup and as stated by the Majority's own witnesses during a hearing last month on the draft legislation, the bill before us falls short.

Not only does H.R. 2687 not contain funding commensurate with the tasks NASA is being asked to undertake, it gives the agency additional unfunded mandates, such as requiring it to start developing a flagship class WFIRST science mission while it works to complete the James Webb Space Telescope.

As a Committee we should also be concerned about that the bill's cuts to the account that funds management and operations at our NASA field centers and the risks such cuts pose to NASA's ability to complete its core missions. That account also funds NASA's IT security measures and the agency's independent technical authority, an essential aspect of ensuring safety and mission assurance in NASA projects. Over the last few years that account has been repeatedly targeted for cuts. Let's remember that this comes also at a time when the centers have attempted to maximize efficiencies even as more cuts, like sequestration come, down the pipeline. This bill would just do further damage.

I think we all share the goal of a strong and vibrant civil space program. I know we all say we want to work in a long-enjoyed spirit of bipartisan but I really just can't see how we can get there from here with this bill. The Majority knows that these funding levels are really a nonstarter and I think they set NASA on an unfortunate path to failure. I really hope that at some point we can agree that the Agency deserves much more.

Later in this markup I will be submitting an amendment that I hope will be the foundation for continued bipartisan support and that will ensure a 21st century space innovation agenda.