

Opening Statement
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Subcommittee on Space

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

“An Overview of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Budget for Fiscal Year 2014”

April 24, 2013

Good afternoon and welcome, General Bolden. Before I start, I'd like to offer my congratulations to NASA and Orbital on the test flight of the Antares launcher on Sunday. The successful test flight speaks well of the teamwork among Orbital, NASA, the Wallops Flight Facility, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport, and the Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority.

Today, we're meeting to review the \$17.7 billion request for NASA's Fiscal Year 2014 budget.

I know, General Bolden, that it has not been easy getting to this point. With sequestration and the late resolution of the Fiscal Year 2013 budget, we in Congress have not provided you with the optimal conditions under which to plan and implement NASA's inspiring portfolio of missions.

I have said before and will say again that our investments in research and development, including space, are investments in innovation, jobs, and future economic growth. If we skimp on the inputs side of the equation, we can't expect positive changes to our nation's capacity for innovation and growth.

That is why we need to take a careful look at how the resources requested match the program content included in the FY 2014 budget request.

At the Full Committee hearing last week on the Fiscal Year 2014 budget request for Science Agencies, the President's Science Adviser, Dr. Holdren, testified that *“NASA has long had the problem of 20 lbs. of missions in a 10 lb. budget, and they continue to.”* I share that concern.

This proposal includes requests for NASA's key priorities—the James Webb Space Telescope, the International Space Station (ISS), and the Space Launch System (SLS) and Orion crew vehicle---along with its Science and Aeronautics programs, and its infrastructure support.

I worry that for all the work NASA is doing to move towards fulfilling the 2010 NASA Authorization Act, that the Agency is also cherry picking aspects of that strategic plan that it finds favorable while undercutting other priority areas in the law.

For instance, the FY 2014 budget request includes a \$105 million down payment to fund initial concept work on a mission that would demonstrate solar-electric propulsion technology that is needed to capture a small asteroid, move it into a trans-lunar region, and then potentially use that asteroid as a target destination for the first crewed flight of the SLS and Orion system.

In addition, the request includes \$820 million a year over the next several years to fund the development of commercial crew capability for transporting astronauts to and from the ISS, a significant increase from the \$400 and \$500 million range that Congress has been willing to authorize and appropriate for those activities in the last three fiscal years.

I fear I've already gotten to the 20 lbs. of program content that Dr. Holdren was talking about in NASA's \$17.7 billion request.

And that doesn't include the unfunded new responsibilities for developing climate sensors that NASA's Earth Science program has inherited from NOAA, the \$50 million increase required for full reimbursement to the Department of Energy for resuming the domestic production of material that is needed to power deep space missions, or the 29 percent increase over FY 2012 actual spending levels being sought for NASA's Space Technology Program.

To NASA's credit, the agency has been making progress in managing schedule and cost on its activities. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) just recently issued a report that stated: "*NASA has had success in the last 2 years in launching missions on cost or on schedule.*" I commend the NASA and contractor workforce on this progress.

Yet, the GAO also says that sustaining the changes that have led to these successes will be challenging within a period of flat or decreasing budgets and with the ongoing work on several large-scale and complex projects.

Should any of the JWST, ISS, or the SLS/Orion programs experience a hiccup, the financial impact could have "*cascading effects on the rest of the portfolio,*" as GAO puts it.

GAO's words of caution give me pause since I don't see a lot of flexibility within the FY2014 request for dealing with that situation.

I hope that today's discussion can clarify the rationale for the proposed asteroid and capture retrieval initiative proposed in the FY 2014 budget, particularly how it contributes to detecting and characterizing 90 percent of near-Earth asteroids 140 meters in diameter or less, and how it advances our capability of sending humans to destinations such as Mars, as set in policy in successive Authorization Acts. In these tight budgetary times, we need to be sure the proposed approach will be the most efficient means of achieving those objectives.

So, I look forward, Administrator Bolden, to what I hope will be the beginning of an active dialogue on both the policy and the resources required to support NASA in effectively implementing its challenging and inspiring portfolio.