

OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Donna F. Edwards (D-MD)
Subcommittee on Space
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

“An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for Fiscal Year 2016”
Space Subcommittee Hearing

April 16, 2015

Good Morning, and welcome Administrator Bolden to today’s hearing. Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this hearing on “An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for Fiscal Year 2016”.

The President is requesting \$18.5 billion for NASA’s programs and plans for Fiscal Year 2016, about a 2.8 percent increase over the Fiscal Year 2015 enacted appropriation. That is a significant topline increase given the current fiscal environment. But is it a proposal that is sufficient to enable NASA to do all that we have asked and expect it to accomplish?

I want NASA to succeed, and I want to provide it with the tools and resources needed to continue to achieve great things for this nation and our citizens. Like the winglets we now see on commercial aircraft that improve fuel efficiency and which were invented through NASA’s aeronautics research program; the scientific exploration of uncharted corners of our Solar System, such as Pluto, where the New Horizons probe will provide our first close-up examination of this remote body when it arrives there this summer; the successful Orion Exploration Flight Test -1, that helps us prepare to once again send humans beyond low-Earth orbit; and being the source of inspiration that lights up children’s faces as they hear from astronauts and researchers, watch a launch, and realize that they too can be our next space scientists, engineers, and explorers.

Mr. Chairman, accomplishments such as these would not have been possible without the ingenuity, know-how, commitment, and dedication demonstrated by the NASA federal workforce and its partners in industry and academia. So, they deserve our thanks for all that they do. They and the public also deserve to know what lies ahead for NASA.

Over the past few years, we have heard from many witnesses that “stability” is a critical enabler for NASA’s progress. That is why in my statement on the House Floor for passage of the now House-passed, bipartisan NASA Authorization Act of 2015, I said that “*NASA needs our constancy of purpose and direction now*” so that we might provide some stability to the agency while we work on a multi-year reauthorization, once the current bill is enacted into law.

So I hope to hear today about whether or not the Fiscal Year 2016 budget request provides NASA with the clear goals that maintain a constancy of purpose.

And one area where the need for constancy of purpose has been widely discussed is human exploration, perhaps because of the commitment of resources and goals that must span multiple Congresses and Presidential Administrations, if we are to be successful in that undertaking.

To that end, I'm pleased that NASA and the community have embraced Mars as the long-term goal for human exploration, and indeed our bipartisan Authorization Act establishes such a goal and directs the development of a roadmap to get us there.

I hope Congress has the foresight to commit the necessary resources to fund a humans-to-Mars plan, because it is a worthy goal that among other things will do much to advance our nation's technological capabilities.

But, as the National Academies stressed a year ago, if Mars is a worthy goal—and they think it is—we need to provide the resources to achieve it. If Congress is unwilling to commit the required resources, we must not let the enthusiasm for a goal of sending humans to Mars divert resources from NASA's other important mission areas; because our bipartisan, House-passed NASA Authorization Act reflects an enduring commitment to NASA's multi-mission role.

I look forward to hearing from Administrator Bolden and to working with him and my colleagues on maintaining a "constancy of purpose" for NASA going forward.

Thank you and I yield back.